MEY WING

A Romance of Cathay

By

REV. THOMAS W. HOUSTON

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The Kansas State Penitentiary
Lansing, Kansas

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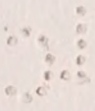

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MEY WING: A ROMANCE OF CATHAY

CHAPTER I.

THE STORY OF CHAO JU.

CHAO JU lived in Tong Dsing. Around on the other side of the planet, where up is down, they have some queer customs. One of these is that when a boy is born, the father announces the joyful news by sending out hundreds of many-colored eggs to his friends. So when Chao Ju was born, the eggs were sent out at the right time. The incense of thanksgiving was burnt in the temple of Kiang Yin, the "Merciful goddess" to whom the incense of prayer had been offered when the mother went to her shrine to ask for a boy. The barber was called in, with his outfit carried on a pole across his shoulders, and the hair was shaved, leaving the little bald cranium with all the bumps showing, and the life-beats pulsing across the soft spot.

If any of you had gone to see the baby, you would have had to take a long journey. Take the steam-cars to San Francisco, and the steamboat to the Land of Long Ago. You must not stop to get more than a glimpse of the mountains and vales and lava trenches of the Sugar Islands. Carry with you a dreamy picture of Oahu, and hurry on, for while you are carried by

steam, and helped or hindered by wind and wave, the baby's days are growing into weeks. The inviting glimpses of Dai Nippon must not tempt you to tarry, and the lights along the shore at Yokohama and Kobe and Nagasaki, that flash and flicker as your steamer swings at anchor through the night-watches, are beacons to guide you onward, for the baby's first moon is changing into the second. When the boat ceases to throw up the green spray of the Japan waters, and cuts through the yellow tide which the Yang Tsi pours out to sea, you had better pack your steamer-trunk. There is no time to spend in Shanghai, if you are to be in at the second shaving of the baby's head. Have your baggage transferred by a wheelbarrow-man to the river steamer, and sometime after midnight, with the turn of the tide, the sound of a strange chorus will arouse you, and with clanking of chains and jolting of clogs, the anchor comes slowly up, dripping muddy water, while the strange Chinese voices chant, "Lai ih, Lai er, Lai,* Lai," and you float down into and steam up the steadily flowing current of the mighty river of China, the highway of an empire's commerce.

As the dawn of the second day comes breathing out of the ocean mist behind you, it meets the shore lights at Nanking. But you must wait to pass through the gates that bar the gloomy passage, piercing the gray old walls. The morning traffic will be blocking the streets, and before you reach the south gate, eight miles away, the passing caravans may cause hours of

* "Come, once, twice, Come on."

delay. Call a canal-boat. Ask of the laoban his number and pledge; tell him to take your baggage to the ancestral home of the Gong clan. Tell him if he is prompt and gets everything there in good shape there will be wine cash in addition to the sum agreed upon as transportation fees. But the boat travel is slow and uncertain, and the baby waits for its first visit to the temple. You had better call donkeys. At your call a dozen boys will come dashing upon as many donkeys, and loudly urge the claims of their respective animals. While you ride, the boy will run behind, and you can reach Tong Dsing, ninety li (thirty miles) away, by evening.

The house of Chao Ju's father was built of adobe, and thatched with straw. The floor was of mud, dried and hardened by tramping of many feet, but it was swept carefully, and looked clean. The baby's cradle was an old tub, and an old cotton comfort was his bed; the old sweet light was in his eye, and his smile, and the old charm which has ever lingered about babies, held those around his tub just as it holds those who gather around costly cradles and silken curtains, and to him also,

"Mother's smiles were baby's skies."

Generally the smiles were plentiful, and the rice sufficient, for her husband was industrious. The three hens laid their eggs in the basket that lay beside the baby's tub, and the baby crowed with pleasure when they cackled with pride over their daily feat. His

almond eyes grew nearly round when he was puzzled or startled by the grunts that came through the thin walls behind him, but when he was older and was carried around where he could see the pigs, he squealed as naturally as they did. The awkward, hump-backed, long-haired calf of the water buffalo that drew his father's plow grew faster than he did, but it remained stupid and awkward, while the baby grew into a bright, merry boy, taking his place as lord over the animals that had been his playmates.

But there was a serious thoughtfulness about his eyes that also distinguished him from the unwinking placidity of the two-year-old buffalo. For changes had come into his home. His mother and father had taken him to the temple, and folded his baby hands decorously, while they were bowing and kneeling before the images in the temple of Buddha, and before the cabalistic characters that promised long life and riches and many children.

And this mother, too, dreamed her dreams, but told them to no one; dreamed of the mystery of the life she saw developing in her little one; dreamed of the misty future when he should grow tall and straight-limbed and strong-armed; of the school days and the scholar's robes; of the examinations and prizes and degrees conferred by the applauding judges; of the time when her days would be crowned by the laurels he would wear; when she would be nourished by the love of her successful son; when her name would be written as the mother of this great one whose baby-

steps her arms had steadied and who had been trained in studious habits by her wise care.

But the dreaming hours grew shorter, and the smiles less frequent when the fever from the flooded rice-fields entered into her husband's blood. As his strength waned, she tried to take his place in the field until she, too, felt the clinging of the dreaded malaria. In the morning as she led the buffalo to pasture, she would take some rice cakes to lay before the gilded mud image of the god of the field and plain, in his earthen shrine on a corner of their field. In the evenings she carefully trimmed and lighted the red candles before the tiny household guardian that sat in his niche in the corner of the kitchen, over her cooking-place. They were not rich enough to build a blank, high wall in front of their door to deceive the evil spirits into the thought that no one lived there, but she did the best she could, and fastened a paper screen in that place. The spirits of the air, she was sure, were outwitted in this way, for they moved in straight lines; but the spirit foxes could turn and twist. It was evident to her that one of these cunning ones had already bewitched her husband, for he would grow cold and hot by turns. At times he would shake and tremble as the witching one frightened him; then the fever would burn, and he would talk to this one who was luring his spirit to join in their spirit life. She sold one of the pigs to get money with which she hired a band of yellow-gowned priests to exorcise the evil. They filled the little house, set up their tablets and

shrines, fastened up their ancient formulas which no one could read, burned their incense and candles, causing tears to run down the baby's fat cheeks and nearly strangling the sick man; beat their gongs, chanted their weird rhymes in an unknown jargon, and after some hours departed, proving the success of their undertaking by the odor of burnt fox-hair behind them, driving before them all evil tormenters, and carrying with them the price of the pig.

But that night she knew that the fox had returned, and was sitting on the chest of her husband. He complained of the weight, and in her agony of heart she tried to push it off. When her hands swept, unresisted, through emptiness, and he still moaned under the increasing weight, bitterness of soul came upon her. She realized she had lost the battle and her husband. She covered her face with her coat, and cried out the death-call. Others came in and joined her, but she noticed them not. The light went out of her husband's eyes and her baby was fatherless.

So mother's tears made Chao Ju's cloudy days, and his face grew thoughtful and questioning from much study of hers. She took up her burdens bravely. Her home was in one end of the house occupied by her husband's kindred. His brothers tilled her fields, and she sewed and cooked and washed for them. The old father and mother directed all.

"Great mother," she would say sometimes, "why did the Illustrious One let the cunning ones take my head from me?" "Ah, wife of my son," the old

woman would say, "I have never read the books of the Wise Ones. How can I answer? But the fox runs not without the consent of the Superior Ones. Heaven willed it, and the destiny of man is bound in the web controlled by the Ten Thousand Great Ones."

There was little in this to comfort the widow, and once she ventured to question the old farmer:

"Grandfather, why did heaven desire your son, who would have cared for you in old age?" "Did not the Great Master, even Confucius, say, foolish one, that since we know not all of earth we need not seek to know heaven? Take care of the little one and keep your house clean, and trouble not your mind with matters which concern not women."

Si Jing, the oldest brother, had a tailor shop in the neighboring town, Tong Dsing. He was one of the town elders, and a member of the lay council that controlled the temple affairs. He was a rigorous ritualist, and exacted from the members of his own family that they should observe the days and ceremonies of worship faithfully. Under his guidance Chao Ju learned early to religiously go through the exercises required, and to speak in awed tones of the countless gods that filled the air above his head. His mother, too, told him of the cunning fox spirits who had coaxed his father away, and gave him a charm to keep them off. This was always tied to a string around his neck.

But if he was a somewhat serious child, he was a healthy boy, and these things did not hinder him from enjoying a boy's games and playthings. He gathered

the singing crickets, and fed them in little pens made of bamboo slips. He watched the elder boys fly kites, and ran with his own papers. He practiced for hours to see how often he could kick a cloth-covered coin into the air without letting it fall to the ground. Through most of the year his daily task was to take care of the lumbering water buffalo when it was not working. When he wished to take it out, he would go to where it was eating and clamber over its great head and immense horns, up its wrinkled neck, and perch on its broad back, with a long switch in his hand. Guiding it with this stick, he would drive it to some grassy spot, and sit or lie on its back for hours while it browsed. Sometimes he would slip off while the brute would go to a deep pond, and drink and wallow in the water with only its head visible. Often, though, he would drive it into the deepest water, and remain on it while it would swim around till he permitted it to go out. If he got wet, his one or two cotton garments did not suffer, and he did not seem to mind it.

The days when his head was entirely shaved had ended. The age of the half-moon tonsure passed, too, and lately a round patch of hair around the crown was allowed to grow long, and was tied with a red cord. Still he had not commenced his student's course. His mother was not able to pay the fees of the village schoolmaster. She knew nothing of letters, and could not help him. His uncles had cares of their own, so the boy's cue was quite thick and long, and he still

kicked his coin, and watched the buffalo while it fed. But he was disturbed by his lack of schooling.

"Mamma, can I go to school next feast?" he would ask.

"The rice crop was not good this year, my jewel, and the taxes are due. Our head men have gone to petition the magistrate to remit a part of our payment this fall, but my heart is not hopeful. Our new magistrate has come with an empty pocket and I fear it must be filled."

"Before my next birthday I will have passed eight New Years, and I know no characters."

"I am very sorry there is no way. Let us pray the gods to grant us good crops next season. Then you can commence."

But when he was ten, his hope was still unfulfilled. His mother went into Nanking to spend a few days with the uncle of her husband's sister's half-niece. There was to be a wedding in the house, and Gong Sau-Dse was wanted to assist in the preparations. While they worked, tongues wagged noisily, and visiting proceeded industriously. The presents for the bride were brought in for inspection. The embroidered garments and silver ornaments were unusually good and numerous for people in their rank, and Gong Sau-Dse remarked on this to another distant relative, who was in for the festal days.

"Our fortunate relative seems to be planning to keep the lilies* of his happy one from all touch with the ground."

* Bound feet.

"Yes, the wolf will not seek her as long as the foreign devils continue their contributions."

"A stupid one listens! My elder sister speaks in riddles."

"What is it my dull lips have failed to make plain to my honored friend?"

"Your younger sister has had bitterness enough from long acquaintance with evil spirits of our own country. Whence is it that devils from outside the eighteen provinces bring happiness to others?"

"Has no word come to your lucky abode of the crafty ones who make their dwelling in human forms that come from over the sea?"

"Our poor place hears little from the great world."

"I indeed am from a mean village and can give little reliable information. But the son of my sister's younger brother-in-law brought his peanuts to market one day, and heard of them. He failed to see them, but while his donkey was resting, he went to a tea-house to rest a rest. There he met a peddler who gave him direct word of them. He had passed the square house where they work their charms, and as he was a fellow-countryman he willingly told what he had learned."

"Ah, that was fortunate! You never can trust to what strangers tell you."

"Yes, so I am sure of the matter. The wall was high and the gate closed, but there was a hole in it through which he could see, and he was so astonished at what he saw that he forgot to call his wares for half

a day. The only one of them that he saw was a little one. It must have been a boy, for there were no bandages on its feet. Instead of walking sedately, it was jumping and skipping like a frog whose pond has dried up. And its hair was not black like the sons of Han, nor smooth in proper braids, but wriggled over its head like the yellow feathers on that hen out there that was hatched on a rainy day and never got dry till the curl was fixed in its plumage."

"Wonderful, wonderful!"

"Well, you may say so! But, still more marvelous to hear, its skin was paler than that of a fortunate woman, whom the sun has never burned, when she lies in her shroud, and it had eyes the color of that blue coat you have on, and light jumped from them so, that once it looked right through him. Indeed, his head has been light ever since, though he came away at once."

"Marvelous! My ears tingle with listening. But enlighten my dull heart, elder sister! What benefit has our kinsman from such beings?"

"Well, strange things take place these days. My eldest son was frightened dead last moon by seeing a fox ride our cow one moonlight night, but I have felt safer ever since, for he never ventures out after dark now. But these strange creatures—the affair stands this way. For some unaccountable reason they desired to open a school in this vicinity, but no one would rent them a building."

"Naturally enough, surely. Such as you describe

are certain to have some sinister thought, and who wants to be responsible for harboring heretical teachings?"

"True words! But our kinsman has long been suspected of neglecting the teachings of the ancients. Besides, he had an old place that had long been unoccupied. The last tenant was a fortune-teller, who failed to offer the proper sacrifices to his familiar, and when he moved the spirit was angry and did not accompany him, and he has frightened everyone else away. Indeed, one man moved in, though the neighbors warned him. But the second night the spirit poisoned the rain that fell through a broken tile to the child's bed, and she died of heat in a few days. So four feasts have passed and the spirits have put the marks of their mouldy wings over the holy characters our kinsman pasted up. Is it not a good play to put the foreign devils to match these evil ones of our own heretical people, and see which will turn tail first? In the mean time, golden lilies may wear satin, for the foreigners have paid a thousand strings of cash for a year's lease."

It was Chao Ju's first visit to the city, and many things were marvelous to him; so the conversation did not strike him as bearing on any matter especially strange. But when a school was mentioned, his ears opened wide. For the desire to know something had grown in him until it was an overmastering longing. He had given his mother and uncles no peace in his pleading for school privileges, until they were almost

ready to make the necessary sacrifices, to have quiet from his importunity. But Si Jing had lately moved to the city and opened a shop, and the expenses of the move and the difficulty in getting trade among so many competitors made it necessary for him to draw on the family for help, and no money could be spared for schooling.

Chao Ju determined that he would see this strange school. He slipped out quietly, and ran down the street to where he had heard that the place was located. There was a gate, but by standing on tiptoe he could look through a small opening. He took hold of the lock-bar to raise himself up, when unexpectedly the gate was pushed open, and he fell inward. He could hear the hum of studying inside the room next the gate, and while he was somewhat frightened, curiosity was strong, and before he got away a teacher came out of the door to see the cause of the noise. As Chao Ju saw that he was an ordinary Chinaman with a kindly face, his desire overcame his fright, and he responded, in backward, country manner, to the inquiries. He was led on by the sympathetic old pedagogue until he had told all about his own longings and the inability of the family to pay the fees. The teacher kindly expressed the wish that he might have so bright a lad in his school, and the boy forgot all about its reputed connection with the strange newcomers. It was late and about time for school to be dismissed, so the teacher asked him to come again on the next day, if he had time, and went back into the school.

As Chao Ju walked away, some of the pupils overtook him. One of them lived near where he was staying, and had played with him on the preceding day. From him Chao Ju learned that the school was a free one. He had heard before of schools established by charitable people for the advantage of poor children, and many a time he had lamented that he did not live near one. Here was his opportunity. Impetuously he besieged his mother, jumbling his discovery and arguments and pleadings so that she could not understand more than half he said. She gathered that there was a free school near, where he wished to go for the few days they were to be in the city. And since she was busy and this would take him out of the way and put him in good hands, she yielded easily.

On the next morning, when for the first time the boy entered a schoolroom as a pupil, his little heart was so full of struggling emotions, exultation and fear, ecstacy and shame for his ignorance, hope and despair, that he struggled with an inclination to either laugh out, or cry, and, suppressing both, wore such a meaningless mask that the teacher doubted whether he were as bright as he had seemed the day before. But the hunger with which he seized upon the characters, and bolted the teacher's suggestions, left no question as to his making a scholar. For a few days he thought of nothing else, as a few of the mysterious characters came to be alive with intelligence to him.

Then the dread of going away took hold of him, and, as the day came near, his face was so troubled at times

that the teacher drew from him his fears. Chao Ju had learned, mean time, that certain of the scholars lived in the building, and that some who were unable to pay, even received boarding without paying for it. He did not ask why this was, but simply laid hold on it as a golden opportunity by which he must profit.

But he did not know how to speak to his mother on the subject. When he did, she was inclined at first to laugh at him. But the boy's persistence and tears and stormings finally carried the day. Even after they learned that the school was under the control of the foreigners, the mother and Si Jing, the uncle, finally consented. After all was said, the school was taught by an old Chinese scholar of some little reputation as a benevolent man. The sacred Confucian characters were studied. They could not see how the boy could be hurt. Even if these queer strangers did desire to lay up credit with their gods by thus helping children of the Middle Kingdom, their boy would be kept, free of cost to themselves, until he was old enough to enter his uncle's shop as an apprentice. Perhaps the mother recalled her dreams of the time when he lay in her arms and her husband was hulling the rice just in the next room.

At any rate, the boy remained. He was taught to recognize and pronounce characters which the teacher wrote for him on slips of red paper. After a time, he took the brush into his own hands and attempted to write. Then he committed the three-character classic, and a catechism of Christian truth. Next he took up

the Confucian Analects, and copies of the Gospels of Matthew and Mark in mandarin dialect. The countless spirits which had peopled the air of his country life gradually receded, and in their place came a new idea, that of a vast, mysterious, overshadowing one, brighter than the sun in his noonday shining, and more terrible than the army with its banners that sometimes tramped past the schoolhouse door and frightened him with the awful insignia of power and death.

There was a pane of window-glass set in the roof over his head, which admitted light to the low room. He had been accustomed only to windows made of oiled paper. This light seemed startingly clear. And the feeling grew on him that the eye of the Great One was looking through that glass, searching out his very thoughts and taking cognizance of his every move. He came to fear it, but did not tell his thoughts to any one. He changed his seat from directly under it to the east side of the room, but every afternoon between three and four o'clock, when the restlessness of the closing hours would fill the room, the eye would reach him again, and the same indefinable dread would come over him. He made no further attempt to evade it, but gave himself up to its searching, first with trembling apprehension; then, as the days became moons, the presence became to him in some sense a comfort. For he was removed from all his kindred, and he did not remember his father's face. The teacher was kind to him, and the other boys were

friendly as boys go. He had grown accustomed to the strange dress and appearance of the bearded foreigner and his sweet-voiced wife, who came occasionally to examine the school and speak about the One who loved them all. But he did not understand them very well, though he liked the oranges the bright-faced lady sometimes laid on his desk as she patted his partly shaven head.

Still, after a year had passed, that eye gave him more sense of being personally cared for than any other of his surroundings. He was making good progress in his books, and when he was twelve he was given the Gospel of Luke to commit. One day he read of how the wonderful Boy went up to Jersualem when He was twelve years old, and entering the temple became so absorbed in discussion of the precious old text-books of His school life, that He failed to heed the passing of the time until His friends had left Him; how He remained there until they returned seeking Him, and how He answered them, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?"

A lonesome, longing wave flowed through his veins. He had no father whose business he might attend to. No one came seeking after him. The afternoon was passing. The teacher was hearing a boy recite. The other boys were variously engaged. He was alone, though others were all around him. He laid his forehead upon his arm on the table in front of him, and thought of the Boy. Who was the Father of whom He spoke? It could not be Joseph, for the carpenter,

though a good man, found no place in the great temple. Chao Ju had daily repeated with the school, "Our Father," but that was to an indefinite Someone whom he did not know, and it did not recur to him now. But while tears of one who was lost fell on his desk, the Eye came searching after him. Its companionship comforted him. At first he received it passively, till suddenly another thought-wave went over him that this was his Father's eye. His heart warmed with the love that filled it, and he straightened up, saying, "I, too, must be about my Father's business."

CHAPTER II.

SAN DSI'S THANKSGIVING.

WU WAN FUH was his name, and that meant that his coming had brought ten thousand happinesses into his father's home. But San Dsi was what he was always called, and that was because he was the third son. No account was made of any number of sisters who may have preceded him. His other name, given him by the teacher of the school where he learned a few characters when he was too small to earn wages, was forgotten in these later days. The father was known as Wu Chuei Dsi, because when a boy, as he was bathing in a pond near his village, he had unwittingly disturbed the water dragon that resided there, and had suffered ever since from a charm woven from the dragon's wrath. He did not at first realize what had happened, but came out of the water chilled and numbed. Severe pains appeared in the limb soon after, and it gradually became twisted and shrunken, and he was called "Wu The Lame."

But we did not know of these things until San Dsi was about twelve years old. I had occasion to go out beyond the Water West Gate one day, and sent for a donkey. It came saddled and bridled and belled, with the usual accompaniment of a donkey-boy. To the uninitiated the word "boy" may be misleading,

for the person so called might be a weazened-up, gray-haired old man. But in this case it was a boy, so diminutive that I was disposed to question his ability to attend the animal.

"I am in a hurry to-day, little one, and fear you cannot run as fast as I wish to go. You had better stay here till I come back. I can manage the donkey."

"Never fear, honored sir; I've followed the beast a thousand li* this moon, and my legs are as tough as his," he protested.

So he trotted along beside the stirrup, or ran forward to lead the donkey over the slippery canal bridges, or guide him through the intricacies of the narrow, crowded streets, or advised short cuts to avoid the more public thoroughfares, where progress would be slower.

I was visiting a sick pupil and taking him some medicine. The boy had been in our school for some time and received the help gratefully, but the relatives were suspicious of foreigners and doses. A native professor of healing had been called in, and, finding internal disorders, proceeded to administer a counter-irritant, by pinching the skin until his neck and shoulders were checkered by spots of dark discoloration. San Dsi listened closely while I protested against such treatment and advised with the family. As we returned he started the donkey briskly from the door to show the animal's style and to prove the importance of his patron's time, but when we reached a quiet

* One-third of a mile.

suburban road, with a wild-rose hedge on one side and a mud wall on the other, he ceased the urging and walked with his hand at the bit.

Presently he said, "The teacher gave the sick boy some pills."

I was always glad, when I had time, to encourage such urchins to talk, for in that way many queer ideas would come out that an older Chinaman would have concealed. But San Dsi was not talking for entertainment that morning. He had a purpose. Not knowing his motive, I assented briefly. He guided the donkey through a splashy pool, from which the skim of ice of the night before was melting. His bare feet took ice or water or stones all alike, and if he felt any discomfort he did not show it. His conversation took a tack.

"Where is the teacher's honorable home?"

"Did you not see my little ones when we started this morning?"

"Truly! Great joy abides in your house."

At another time he would have followed this line until he had learned of all my family connections, but then he was wanting to get back to the main course.

"But the teacher is not a citizen of our mean country. He has illustrious parents?"

"Yes."

"What country is honored by their presence?"

"They live in America."

"Ah, you people that live under the Great Starry Banner are clever."

I modestly kept silence. The little fellow had learned early the polite labyrinth of roundabout approaches to the desired point. I wondered what he had in mind, and let the reins hang loose. The boy still walked ahead, and the short cue dangled over his blue cotton coat. It was tied with white cord. He was wearing mourning. He turned partly around.

"Your physicians are wonderful men. They have studied all diseases."

He was evidently steering straight again. I made no response, but unwisely allowed a smile to be interpreted as an assent to medical infallibility. He turned squarely.

"There are no sick where there are such physicians." I could not allow that to pass unrefuted.

"Oh, yes," I admitted, "we have some sick."

He ruminated over this for a time, and then concluded: "Certainly! The wonderful doctors must have some practice or they could not maintain their marvelous skill. But what joy it would be to live where men do not have to die."

Mentally connecting this with the white cord in his cue, I resolved to do some questioning myself. First, though, I somewhat undeceived him as to the extent of our medical abilities. Then by questioning I drew from him that he had been in our parts but a few days. His home had been in the north. His father was a peddler, who carried his little stock of cloth and thread and needles from town to town and house to house. He was lame, and the loads were often heavy. But he

was faithful and patient, and the needs of his growing family urged him on. San Dsi had two brothers and three sisters. They generally had enough to eat, and if their wadded garments were not sufficient for the needs of all, those who must go out in their cold northern winters wore them, and the others huddled over the adobe kang, through which the smoke and heated air from the cooking-place passed in exit.

But the children of Han who dwelt along the shores of the River of Sorrows* neglected the sacrifices to the god of the river. In his anger he swelled himself to immense dimensions and lay athwart the river until the waters rose, and, bursting the dikes, rushed over the surrounding fields, carrying with them disease, distress and death.

The Wus were not directly affected by this, as they did not farm, and their village was some distance from the river. Still, living was much more expensive, and the father had to spend more hours on the road. He might not stop for rainy or cold days. As the winter wore on the pain in his limb grew worse, until at times he was unable to go out. The famine region spread. With it traveled the plague god, and many who were weak with hunger died stricken by the latter. San Dsi's two older brothers, to whom the father had looked for assistance in the near future, were put in their coffins and carried out to the pauper's lot. Money was too scarce to admit of their buying burial-ground. Then a family council was held. It was evident that

* Huang Ho.

their old enemy, the pond dragon, was not forgetting his anger. As long as they lived in that vicinity they could hope for no relief. They must move away. Their wadded clothes were nearly gone. In the south the warm-blooded dragons breathed gentler air over the earth. The plan was agreed on. The father must go ahead to spy out a place. The eldest child, a girl nearly grown, was to become the second wife of an official. Part of the amount received at her betrothal went to her outfit. The net proceeds were invested in goods to be sold on his journey. The others were expected to manage for themselves in some way until he sent for them. So one morning the lame man shouldered his carrying-stick and faced southward, and his family had not seen him since. They managed to shift through the spring and summer. But when winter drew near again the outlook was gloomy. Finally they, too, had come south, mortgaging the old home for a little with which to pay off debts and buy a donkey to carry a few pitiful household necessaries. The mother and San Dsi walked all the way, and the two little girls, whose feet were still living and tender, alternately rode and walked. They had taken refuge in a mat-shed among the other northern refugees just outside the city walls, supported precariously by the earnings of San Dsi and the donkey.

The lad told the story very simply. If it was pathetic it was only because the bare facts made it so. He did not seem to realize it, nor seek to embellish it with particulars. But in view of the sturdy little

back under its misfit coat, and the firm little hand guiding the animal through the crowded streets to which we had come, and the meagre, dirty, white cord in his hair, a respect grew for one who, as a child, had already learned the bitterness of life, and had assumed its burdens without complaining.

The next day I rode under his guidance again, and when the day's round was completed he piloted me to the piece of coarse matting under which their rice-pot was set on three stones. The two little girls sat outside to get whatever heat the sun would afford while it lasted. The mother half lay on a quilt near the fire, where she could watch the few coals while she sewed on some shoe soles. She did not rise, but looked stolidly ahead while San Dsi explained what he had not spoken of before, that she was sick and her feet, mere stumps wrapped in old cloths, had become worn and inflamed with the long tramp, until she was unable to stand. A man may not speak of a woman's feet in the ancient kingdom, so nothing could be learned as to the extent of the injuries, but the lines of suffering and throbbing of fever could be seen in the ill-nourished face and neck. The winter twilight was closing. A chill was creeping through the damp air. One thin quilt must cover the mother and two girls. San Dsi must curl up in his clothes. The misery of it all was overwhelming.

"San Dsi," I said, "are you afraid of us foreigners?"

"No."

"Well, then, do as I say. There is a great hospital

near my home. If your mother will go there she will have medical treatment and food and medicine, and she will soon be all right. If she stays here, who can assure her life?"

The woman was ready for anything, and in a short time the few belongings were intrusted to the occupant of the next shed (who disappeared the next day); the woman was placed astride the donkey. The boy led it and the girls followed. Though it was dark before the procession reached the hospital, the woman was made comfortable and the boy and girls were given shelter for the night by a native attendant.

The following day was Thanksgiving. Though in a far country, our hearts remembered Zion, and we observed national occasions and home customs with jealous love. In the morning Mrs. Wu was found to be resting in greater comfort than she had known for weeks. She had been given a bath and was in clean clothing, on a clean bed. With skillful dressing of her feet the pain was allayed. Fever was gone. Good food and hope had nearly completed a cure, but she would have to keep quiet for some days. When she saw me she exclaimed:

"O sir, this is heaven! I keep thinking I am still making a dream. Truly, the merciful goddess has remembered me."

I did not stop then to instruct her in theology, as I had many steps to take, but expressed pleasure at her improvement. She inquired for the children, and was told that they were being cared for. Then she sighed,

"If my husband were alive now I could enjoy this happiness."

I hurried on my way, and, after attending a service held by our little group of foreigners, enjoyed a Thanksgiving dinner, in which Chinese pheasants took the place of the American turkey. We lingered at the table for the sake of "Auld lang syne." Afterwards two newly arrived young men and myself started for an afternoon outing over Dsi Jing Shan, the Purple Mountain. Our way led us for four miles through the city to the East gate, outside of which we turned aside from the road and began the ascent. We rode thus far. The younger men had horses, but I had the donkey and San Dsi. We left the animals on the slope. Giving directions that they should meet us several miles farther on, at the foot of another path, we started for a tramp over the crest. The day, the freedom from routine, the dinner, the good-fellowship, the sunlight and bracing air, all put us in good fettle, and we took the rise at a rapid pace.

The trench occupied by the Tai Ping rebels when they besieged the city was passed. A sharp climb brought us to the crown of the first eminence, where the ruins of an ancient rock fortress were viewed, from which we looked back over the great city to the noble river beyond, flowing to the sea. Then we went on along the ridge of the hills, following a downward bend, then abruptly upward for a mile till we reached a Buddhist temple, plastered on the outside and yellowed with ochre. The priest in charge soon had tea set out for

our refreshment. In a few moments we started forward, heading for the highest point, half a mile farther on. On either hand the mountain-side sloped rapidly downward to populous villages, and the roads running from the city through each line of villages looked like yellow strings connecting them. An occasional traveler seemed to be crawling, beetle-like, along these strings. Little brown and green lizards, darting among the rocks over which we made our way, were the only moving things near us, and no sound reached us from below. Our own voices rang out strangely distinct in the silence. Suddenly, as we rounded a jagged corner, we were startled by another sound, a groan of some one in pain. We could see no one, but the sounds seemed to come from the rocks at one side. Then I made out the words, "Water, water," repeated in indistinct tones. Some one was suffering up there, no matter how improbable it might seem. A few steps brought me to where the sounds issued from a crevice. Pushing aside a heavy stone, evidently placed there to serve as a door, an irregular niche was discovered, in which was lying a man, weak and emaciated.

"What do you want?" I called to him.

He answered by again groaning for water. There was none nearer than the temple we had passed, so I went back and brought some in a bowl. He was lying, when I got back, as when first seen, his eyes closed, his lips parted, parched and swollen. A small dose of water revived him, and soon he sat up and began to talk.

"Who are you?" I then asked him.

"A seeker after happiness," he replied.

"Truly a good aim," I said. "But by what road does my elder brother seek to travel?"

"By the road of the myriad joys, through the gateway of the thousand purifications, even the path marked out by our great Lord Buddha, the Illustrious Prince of the Shining Way."

The words were such strange ones to come from this sick, unlettered peasant, that I paused before speaking again. The impression on my mind had been that he was a fugitive hiding on account of some crime. He was muttering, "O mi to fu, O mi to fu," the charmed sounds by which the devout appeal to Prince Sagyimuni, whom one-third of the world worship as the Lord Buddha who has led the way to Nirvana.

"My brother is sick and weak. Will he have some food?" I asked.

He raised his head and observed me closely. The dim light of the recess showed him dress, features and complexion such as he had never seen.

"Who are you?" he asked wonderingly.

"A friend who wants to help you."

"Do you know the way?" he asked eagerly.

With great joy I answered: "Yes, I know the way. If my brother will tell me of the way he has come, I will lead him to the gates of Eternal Life."

He was very weak, and spoke with difficulty. We gave him a sup of water and looked around for some food, but he shook his head and motioned me to sit

down near him. We feared he was hardly able to talk, but his eyes were eager and he began slowly.

"The road has been long and hard, its resting-places few, and many weary steps have led me back again to my starting-point. I am a sinner. In my youth I offended the spirits, and have always carried the burden of it in my flesh and on my heart." As he spoke, a motion of his hand led my eyes to his leg, which I noticed was shrunken and misshapen. He went on: "My family has suffered with me. Two are not, and I know not how it is with the others. The road led me from them, and for seven moons I have wandered, lonely and hungry, seeking a resting-place. The ten thousand Holy Ones had not decreed peace for me. The spell of the dragon clung to my leg till it became as lead and dragged at my vitals. When I reached the foot of this mountain, the Shining Way appeared in a night dream. With my hands I lifted my dead foot up the thousand steps, and found this niche in which to lay the weary body. For thirty days I have not tasted food. The water which I brought up lasted until yesterday. The days of my purifying are nearly over. I hunger no more. My three spirits will soon go to their appointed places. My family have long mourned me as departed. But my sins are still heavy upon my heart. The dragon clings to my leg. I fear he will drag down my spirit to his realms. My eyes grow dim, and I am stupid. I see not yet the way. Now if you are sent from the Holy Ones to tell me the way, a sinful little one listens."

We had heard of discouraged, despairing men who sought by fasting and meditation in solitude to clarify their vision of things unseen by the eye, and to placate vengeful spiritual enemies. This was one. We revived him with another cup of water, and would have hastened after food, but feared he would not take it. Then with great eagerness I sought to make plain to his dark and weakened mind the story of Him who is the Way, the Truth and the Life. He lay with closed eyes. At times I feared he was not listening, but when I paused, he whispered, "Go on." I spoke simply and briefly as possible, "as to a little child," and added:

"The Saviour who sent me to you, my brother, is the Way. He will carry you through. He does not demand more fasting and suffering. He may have work for you to do for Him. You have found the Way. Now get strong to walk in it. Shall I bring you some food?"

I do not think he had any desire for food, but circumstances had led him to accept my guidance. I ran to the temple, and soon had a little rice gruel, which he took with some difficulty.

Without saying anything to him about what was to be done, I ran down the mountain path to where San Dsi was waiting, and rode over to a village, where men were secured to carry the sick man. When we returned the sun was setting. The man looked up passively as we reached him, questioning with his eyes.

"My friend, you cannot get strong here. These

men are to carry you into the city, where you can be cared for."

It was a new experience for him, this being cared for. His life had been a struggle against the tide. He was too weak to resist, if he had cared to, and he silently allowed himself to be borne down the mountain-side. It was quite dark when we reached the spot where our animals awaited us. We gave directions as to where he should be taken, and hurried on ahead to relieve the anxiety of our friends over our absence, and to prepare for his coming. Hastening to the hospital, we asked to have him received that night, and helped to make arrangements.

While waiting for the men to arrive, I went into the women's ward to speak to Mrs. Wu. She was sitting up, talking to the two girls, who had been allowed to go in for a while before bedtime. She looked up brightly, the stolidity all gone from her face.

"Ah, teacher, this has been a wonderful day for me! The good nurse has been talking to me. She told me about this Thanksgiving Day and about the great Saviour who loves us so. It is wonderful, wonderful beyond thought. But when I think how His disciples act; of how my own people who serve Him are so good to such a worthless old stupid as I am, I think it must be true, and the bitterness runs out of my heart. But, oh, dear, my poor husband! How he would have rejoiced to hear such news! I used to complain at him because we lived so meanly. But when I saw him no

more I remembered how patient he had always been and how hard he always tried to do for us, even when the dragon charm pulled hard at the cords of his leg. Ah me, ah me! Lonely I am. The bitterness comes back to my heart."

Speaking words of comfort when they do not bring back the husband is not easy. I thought to ease the pain by diverting her mind to San Dsi, and told her of how he had accompanied us, and, in accounting for his absence, told of our experience of the afternoon. When I spoke of the road the wanderer had traveled seeking happiness and mentioned his struggling up the mountain with his shrunken limb, a wistful wonder came into her face. Just then the sick man was brought in and set down in the hallway. He was exhausted, but the physicians administered restoratives, under which he soon revived, and looked around in puzzled awe. San Dsi came into the lighted room, his eyes blinking because of the sudden change from the outside darkness. At the same time his mother came from the opposite door, weak and trembling with excitement and suffering, for each step caused torturing pain in her feet. She tottered straight to the couch where the sick man lay. Their eyes met, and she uttered a cry and fell towards him. San Dsi sprang under her, supporting her, and the two little girls ran crying to her side.

But on her knees she made to the couch, and fondled the strangely twitching face and wet the cold hands

with her tears, crying between her sobs: "My husband, my husband! Jesus has sent His messengers to find us both. Come, San Dsi, come, little ones! This is our Thanksgiving Day, too."

CHAPTER III.

THE MOTHER LOVE.

About the time when Chao Ju recognized the Eye, his mother thought she saw a lesser light. It was evident that the god who presided over her crops and had his residence in the field-shrine her husband had spent much time in fitting up for him, was offended because the heir of the house no longer lighted the candles at his feet. At the time of sowing the spring crops the mother and uncles arranged quite a feast in his honor. They had been owing entertainment for some time to a number of their neighbors, but had not felt able to spend the money necessary to prepare the courses which would fittingly maintain their position. But now they perceived that they could sweep both heaven and earth with one broom. The great red papers were procured. The skill of the teacher-uncle was drawn on and invitations in the proper form were prepared. The old father surveyed the forms very carefully, and, though secretly quite proud of his son's achievements, undertook to criticise some points, as it was proper that the head of the house should be able to do. This was finally sent: "To the honorable, the great man, Mr. Li Si Hwa, greetings: The viands will be prepared for the evening hour of the twenty-first of the spring moon. Gong Je Ying bowing down, offers regards."

They had desired to fix the time a day or two later, when the moon would not rise until an hour after dark, but the fortune-teller whom they consulted in search of a lucky day for the function assured them that the conjunction of forces on their preferred date would be such that the wind and water would not be propitious and the genii of agriculture would be perturbed, while all signs pointed to the twenty-first as an auspicious occasion. Accordingly, on the morning of that date, the tables were arranged and the feast spread out from the first course, of watermelon seeds, to the tenth, of sharks' fins, and the rice was made ready.

The good things were mostly procured from a restaurant. The housewives were hardly to be trusted in such an important case, and more, the household god would probably be jealous, did he see such a spread intended for another. Even when the rice was cooked in his presence, a goodly portion was left standing before him, and great care was taken to speak loudly in his hearing, of their unusual poverty which would compel them to refrain from making that offering to him which his goodness and protection deserved.

In solemn silence the family assembled, and, each in his order, they made their obeisance before the shrine of the neglected god, acknowledging both his power and the favors he had granted them in the past seasons. Allusion was made to some shortness in measure of the immediately preceding crop, and he was importuned to look with acceptance upon the poor offering now before him, and in his bounty cause their

seeds to germinate, and direct the winds and rain so that by another harvest season his servants would be able to make a more plentiful return.

They feared that Chao Ju's absence would be detected, so a neighbor's boy of the same size and complexion as the absent one was found, made to wear a new coat which had just been prepared for the boy at school, and taken with the family to the sacrifice.

The guests had been invited to assemble at candle-lighting, in the hope that the evening might be cloudy, but they all came together while the moon was flooding the yellow fields with its mellow beams. There was prospect that they would have a long wait for the viands, for as long as such light was given, the eyes of the god jealously guarded the tables standing before him. Moments passed which seemed to the embarrassed hosts and hungry guests to be leaden-footed hours. The only clouds visible hung low in the western sky, and the moon mounted higher in full-orbed state. The situation was one demanding desperate remedy. Even in the west the cumulus mountains were being pierced by starry rays, and the night bade fair to be cloudless. The elder of the uncles slipped out and gathered a number of younger members of the families whose representatives were among the waiting guests, dressed them in beggar clothes and sent them to collect the food, which the god would suppose had been stolen. The family would escape his anger since the charge of impious sacrilege could not be laid against those who had so piously offered what vandal

hands removed. The feast was hastily prepared and served, no allusion being made by the punctilious guests either to the delay or to the manner in which the provisions had been rescued. The prestige of the Gong clan was heightened and all proper steps had been taken to secure the favor of the exalted ones.

With the certainty of good crops, they felt safe in purchasing a pomegranate garden lying next to their fields, agreeing to pay for it in the fall, and borrowing money to make a small advance as bargain-binder. This added work to hands already full, and that season's rice and beans were not attended to as well as was demanded, but the field god was relied on to see that the ground did not harden.

It was impossible to explain what followed. Even the card-dealing fortune-teller was at a loss to account for it. But while their neighbors had fair crops the threshing-floor of the confident Gongs was scantily covered. The humbled head of the family was compelled to sue for the indulgence of his creditors. Then a council was held. Si Jing was called from his tailor shop in the city to give his advice. The gray-haired father spoke first.

"The rice gangs are full. Our bowls need not be empty until next season's harvest is due. But the sacks lie unfilled. There will be none carried to market this year."

He paused to draw at his long-stemmed pipe which he had refilled while speaking. A few strong pulls and the pellet of tobacco was consumed and meditatively

knocked out on the floor at his side. The second son lighted his pipe with the still glowing embers while the eldest spoke:

"Our chopsticks will have work, but the cow must be satisfied with straw, and the beans will hardly suffice to fatten half the pigs."

Si Jing had brought his water pipe with him from the city, and waited now to take several draws through the gurgling water before passing the pipe to the next brother. No one volunteered any remark, so he continued: "The Great One who guards our fields must have gone to sleep with a full stomach and be waiting for you to rouse him with another feast."

The younger counsellors looked at the rigorous temple elder in poorly concealed surprise. He was not accustomed to speak slightingly of the holy ones. Still the case seemed to justify unusual views. One said: "The elders of Lotus Pond village, last feast, became convinced that their guardian did not realize the heat that was drying their fields, and allowed him to stand uncovered in the center of their market-place through the heat of a seventh-moon day. Perhaps the Great One would understand our straits more clearly were we to place him where he would be roused each morning by the squeals of the hungry swine."

No one responded by smiling even. It was not known that Gong had ever failed in reverence. The little old mother from her corner spoke to the backs of the men. "Have you considered that the Wise One may have seen through the imposture and knows that

our little one is not being trained to worship at the shrine of his fathers?"

The concert of smoking continued while they waited for some one else to speak. It is not the custom for women to intrude their opinions in the councils of men in the Middle Kingdom. Still they felt that the mother had hit at a vital point. When the old man's pipe went out he laid it on the table, and fingered the cup of tea that stood at his elbow.

"The boy," he said finally, "is old enough to be earning something. I would not that he should grow up without piety, and idle. Let him come home to partake with us of the feast of the eighth moon."

Gong Sao Dsi heard from her retired seat where she was sewing on winter shoes for the boy. She had sometimes felt twinges of jealousy when in talking with him she realized with what strong affection he regarded the foreigners who controlled his school, and she was vaguely disturbed as she speculated as to his future should he remain under their influence. But she knew the sorrow he would pass through were he to be removed, and sympathized with it to a certain extent. There was very little outlook for him on their meagre farm. It was barely able to fill the many mouths already relying upon its products. But she feared a reproof did she break into the council with her fears. Yet almost she had persuaded her faltering voice to break the silence when the youngest son spoke.

"The prospect is that we will have to wear our girdles a little more tight than usual during the coming

feasts without extra mouths to fill. The boy's hands are now soft and his head empty of all but characters. Why must we carry this burden?"

"True," said Si Jing, "the little brother has grown to manhood's discretion. He has nursed with the fox's cub. My father is wise and has always guided his family in prosperous paths. But if he will deign to listen to one who is dull in understanding, he will be able to say whether a thought that has come to me is worthy of consideration."

" 'The eldest whelp will some day divide to the old lion his share,' " quoted the father; "let my son tell his plan."

"Before coming out, I went to see the boy. He seemed very well, and full of hope. I would hardly recognize in him the boy who used to ride our buffalo to pasture. The characters of the great Master are stored up in his stomach and his pen is that of a judge in the examinations. He sent his reverent obeisances to you all. While I was smoking a pipe with the gate-keeper he told me that these foreign people have also opened a school for girls. What queer ideas lead them in thus wasting their time cannot be imagined. But that concerns us not now. If we can profit by their foolish extravagance we need not wait to counsel them in wisdom. What help we can get in our present straits is only a part of that return which is due from the people beyond the four seas to the children of the Son of Heaven. For has not our great Emperor allowed them to come here and learn the wisdom which has

come down to us from our immortal ancestors, that, returning, they may nourish their own land therewith?"

"My son has a discerning mind. But what is this to us?"

"Yes, I was going to tell that. The gatekeeper also told me that the foreigner's wife is not strong, and needs a woman to assist her in the school to do such work as our little sister here is well prepared to do. Now if my mother could spare her for a time we would be relieved from providing the food to fill her mouth, and the wages she would send to us each month would go to make us independent of the favor or anger of the unappreciative spirit who receives but gives not. Once the pomegranate garden is paid for, we can let the fields lie for pasture, and save our labor heretofore spent in offering to the Greedy Ruler."

"Since my first-born has put his trust in the Deity of the Shears and Needles he forgets to reverence the Great One who has nourished his fathers for many generations. It is not well to speak so, for who can tell when his words may be reported by the unquiet wraith of some gossip whose children fail in filial devotion? Still, these words are not without discretion. But who would care for the little daughter of our nephew who has been left in our home?"

"Why could she not eat of the foreigner's rice for a time?"

And so it came about that the mother and son both lived within the gates of the Barbarian that winter,

and the little niece also began to learn of the way that leads to the Beautiful Gates.

Thus it is that the Infinite Father of all whom He has made of one blood, in spite of foolish racial pride and selfish motives, leads wanderers to the Light of Ages.

But Gong Sao Dsi did not comprehend the light. When Chao Ju recognized the Eye she was still walking in darkness. It was not surprising that she did not at first understand when he spoke in terms of an equation she had not studied. He received permission to visit her after study hours one evening when she was resting from her work.

"Mother, I must be about my Father's business."

"Why, child," she said, "your uncles are looking after that. You are too little yet to take up such heavy work."

"Oh, no," he replied, "I mean my Father in heaven."

"I know not, child, where your father may be now. The home of the spirit foxes is hidden from our eyes. Heaven is pictured in the temples of Lord Buddha as a place of many joys, and I would rather think of him as there than as in the place of sin and suffering. But most do I wish he were here with us."

"Yes, mother." The lad spoke wistfully. "I have dreamed of playing by his side, though I never could clearly see his face, much as I wanted to know his likeness. But when I waked I would cry to know it was but a dream. Now, however, I speak not of my grandfather's son, but of the eternal Father, his and yours

and mine, Him whom the Child served when just my age, and whose Eye searches for me every day in the schoolhouse."

"Why, son, what strange notions are you speaking?"

"Have you not heard, mother, of the Child in the temple?" And he found the story in a gospel portion and read to her of the wondrous Child among the doctors.

"Surely, it is a pretty old tale, my boy. But what has it to do with me?"

"Don't you see, mother, that He set us an example of how we, too, should serve the Father?"

"But your father is gone, and it is to me now, and to your grandfather, that your service is due."

And the mother would not understand what the boy tried so hard to make clear to her, for although she seemed to him to be dense, secretly she was terrified with the thought that he was drifting from the moorings of ancient faith, into strange harbors, or to wide seas where she could not follow him. Life and death to her had always been mysterious, from whose changes she had shrunk into the quiet of tradition and custom. Her husband had been carried away in a gale of the one, and now her boy was sailing off in the dim vistas of the other to realms where she could not follow. She could not argue, for he was beyond her depth or height. She simply tried to hold him down by force of dumb inertia. But young birds who have discovered their wings may not be denied their use. So the boy with each trial of faith found more delight in the breadth of

new life brought within his ken. When she was in his dormitory a few days later, mending his stockings, he spoke again.

"Mother, the Child acknowledged the Father when He was twelve. I will be thirteen in two more moons."

"My child, I do not understand you. Why are you not content to walk in the path of your ancestors? Have you, too, swallowed the witching pill? These foreigners seem so kind and honest that I had almost thought that a foolish slander. But seeing you so of one thought, without a second, I doubt the advantage of constantly eating their food. I think we had all better return to your grandfather's house ere we lose our senses entirely."

It was Saturday afternoon. The school-room was empty.

"Come, mother," said the boy, "to my desk. You can see it."

She did not know what he was meaning, but glad to be moving, she went with him. They sat down on the bench and he showed her his books, his writing copies, and his new pens. The patch of light on the floor moved gradually toward their backs while they talked. He told her of the Eye that had followed him ever since he entered the school. She nervously remembered hearing his uncles speak of the Evil Eye which caused so much sickness and death in the neighboring village until it was exorcised by a great priest from a distant city, and did not in any way doubt the truth of his experience. As he told of how it searched his heart

and knew of the loneliness and sorrow hidden there, and found his secret thoughts, she shivered and drew her coat more closely over her breast.

"Are you cold, my mother?" he said. "But see, the Eye is searching for you, too. Do you not feel its warming and comfort?"

The clouds of the afternoon broke away and the light shone through, bathing her face and throat. But even while he was rejoicing in thus securing for her a meeting with his great Friend, she broke away with a cry of fear, and ran to her own room and hid her face, trembling and unnerved. Chao Ju, puzzled and sad, sat for a time, then went to the bright-faced lady who reviewed his lessons from time to time. He found her sewing on a little dress.

"Lady," he said, "my heart is divided. One half is bright and joyous because I have so good friends here since my earthly father has been taken away, and because I have found my Heavenly Father who comes searching for His lost little one. The other half is heavy and sad because my mother cannot understand." And he told of the Eye, of his reading of the Child, of the Father's comfort for his loneliness, of his trying to lead his mother to see what had helped him so much.

The lady listened with tears in her eyes and a song of praise in her heart. How had this little one got so far out of the darkness, and she nor any of his teachers had known of it? And with the gladness of her heart shimmering through her smile, the music of her joy sweetening her voice, and the shining of her soul in

her eyes she let the little dress lie with the needle in the unfinished seam, holding his hand while she talked to him. Concluding, she said: "Now, my little son, the Lord does not come to us all in the same way. This little dress would not do for my big girl, and your cap would not become your good mother. The light that came to you in the school passed over a good many other little boys, but its warmth was felt only by their backs, it did not reach to their hearts. To you God made the sun His messenger. To others it was only a light. To your mother He will come in some other way, causing her also to recognize His presence. Never fear."

He went away comforted and with clearer vision. Recognizing his inability to lead his mother to his view, the longing grew that the light would come to her, and the desire to, in some way, bear witness to what the Heavenly Father was to him became stronger. He read of how the Son received baptism as a fulfillment of the requirements, and read of the command that such as believed were to be baptized. He went directly to the lady.

"When can I receive the rite of washing?"

"Why do you desire that?"

"Because it is commanded."

"By whom?"

"The Book says the Lord left it as a precept to His disciples."

The lady led him to the pastor and told his request. The pastor was perplexed. He would have no hesi-

tancy in baptizing his own son with such a testimony, but this boy's friends and surroundings were all such as to render the living up to such a profession extremely difficult, if not improbable.

"My boy," he said, "think it over; talk it over with your mother and uncle. Try yourself and study the way a little longer. Then come back and we will talk it over again."

The lad was puzzled. He could see no reason for delay, but the next time his uncle called he told him what he wanted to do. The uncle went to the mother.

"What has bewitched the boy?" he asked. She could not answer. She expected Si Jing to get in a passion, and to denounce all those connected with the school, and she would not have been surprised had he demanded that she and the boy pack and depart at once from the place where he was learning to cast off the beliefs of his father's house and race. But her astonishment was great when he continued:

"That he should give attention to these new doctrines I am not surprised. I myself have felt the hollowness of some of our ancient customs. But that he should acknowledge the superiority of the foreigner by rejecting his ancestors and joining the Jesus church, we must not allow. His name would be stricken from the family roster and he would be cut off from any share in the inheritance. It would cause the scornful finger of our neighbors to be pointed at our father's house, and you and I would have to bear the blame. No; command him to think no more of any public rite, but

to give heart with ten parts earnestness to the acquisition of the characters and wisdom which the Great Master gave the people of the Eighteen Provinces for their guidance."

Gong Sao Dsi repeated this to the lad, with dark hints as to the terrible wrath of his uncle should he persist in his own way. He thought over it for a few days more, then went to the pastor.

"When can I receive the rite of washing?" The pastor questioned him closely as to his faith, and was satisfied.

"Have you talked with your mother, my boy?"

"Yes."

"And is she willing?"

"No; she and my uncle forbid it."

"Then why do you still ask me to do this?"

"Because the Child was just as old as I am now when He acknowledged the Father in the temple. I would like to remember all my life that He and I had done that at the same age."

The pastor questioned as to his knowledge of the possible results of the step, his uncle's wrath and the rage of the family in the country. The boy had thought of it all, he said, and had made his choice. Then the Spirit of God, who taketh away fear, came into them both. They kneeled down and the elder man put the boy with a man's faith into the keeping of the God of Samuel, and on the following Worship Day set him apart to be the Lord's.

After the service Chao Ju walked back to the school

under a sky which seemed to the others in no whit different from the ordinary skies of a cloudless eight-moon day, but to him it was writ in the hues of light and spoken in twitter of birds that he had been received into the number of the children of God. And he was well content.

His mother was present and saw it all, dumb with astonishment and apprehension. She feared the wrath of Si Jing, but dared not delay making known lest she should be charged with complicity. In answer to her summons Si Jing came the next morning before school hours. Chao Ju was taken to her own room, where his uncle arraigned him on the charge of insolent irreverence and reproached him bitterly. He made no denial and attempted no defense except that the command of the Word left him no alternative even when met by the prohibition of kindred. He spoke simply, with no fear and no defiance, putting forth no argument, and in his manner acknowledging their rights to treat him as they would. The mother marveled at the quiet strength of the hitherto timid boy. The uncle was at heart uneasy, but supplied the place of argument by giving reins to his anger. The mother trembled for her son, and would fain have shielded him, but the uncle, in a towering passion, whipped him, demanding between the blows whether he would recant his profession and promise obedience to his lawful guardians. But the boy, though writhing in pain, held fast to his convictions, and, convinced of its fruitlessness, he desisted.

And then came the second astounding occurrence. The mother gathered her bruised and sobbing boy in her arms, and, forgetful of the defeated and angry man sitting in the corner, wept with him. Then the light came to her heart, too, and she cried out: "Oh, my boy, my son. Weep on, but let your tears now be of joy! I, your mother, will learn from you to believe and to be true. The Child came to teach us all, and thou hast learned His secret. Be glad, my little one. I have seen a light which shall brighten my lonely path. Together we will walk in it, for thy courage and thy gentleness are born of Him who gave to His mother a son when she was under the shadow of His cross. There will we dwell."

CHAPTER IV.

MEY WING AND THE LADY.

Wu, The Lame, did not grow strong on his feet. The hospital treatment and the food, and the presence of his family worked, together with spiritual peace, to restore a good degree of health and vigor. But the lame limb was useless and the other seemed to be in some way affected by the long vigil and fast on the mountain. He walked no more without crutches. The winter was well over when the doctor said the hospital could do no more for him. The mother had found a place as nurse in a near-by gong gwan—as they called the rich man's home—and San Dsi was still earning little more than his own support with the donkey. They found rooms to live in. Mrs. Wu came home once in a while for an hour to visit and help. Wu sat on a bench and earned some money by whittling flutes and toys. He and the two little girls did the housekeeping together. But the housekeeping was very simple. Each one folded his quilt on rising. Mey Wing took two cash and went to the neighboring shop after hot water for tea and toilet, while Ma Dsi swept the floors. Dry bread and weak tea made the breakfast, over which Wu always reverently gave thanks, asking to be guided in the Way that day. They made fire in the middle of the day and cooked rice enough

for dinner and supper, and had pickled cabbage or carrots as a relish. Occasionally there would be a small dish of pork or fish, from which each ate sparingly, picking it out deftly with chopsticks. What need of table linen put on the table just to be soiled? They placed the relishes or meat in the center of the square deal table, put on two chopsticks for each mouth, and the table was set. A bowl of rice before each one furnished the staple. When they had eaten to the full, the bowls and chopsticks were easily rinsed and set away and the girls had nothing more to do. Simple as their life was, rent and clothing and food for themselves and the donkey called for more cash than they all earned. Rice bills had to be paid, but clothing was not renewed; and when the winter came again, there was not a wadded garment in the house.

The doctor, though a busy man, rarely failed to inquire how the lame man was doing, if his calls led him in their direction, but the lack of good assistants kept him in the hospital that fall, until on the first wintry Sabbath he missed them from the services, and made inquiries. At his suggestion one of the elders visited them, and came back with the request that the doctor would call at the home of the Wus on the next day. The lame man sent regrets and apologies for asking this, but he was unable to go to the doctor, and he had a little matter to discuss.

Mey Wing was watching at the door, and when she saw their friend coming, she whisked into the house

to give the news, then waited at the door to receive the guest.

"Good morning, doctor; my father is not well, and asks that he may be pardoned for not coming out to receive you. Will you come in where he is?"

They found the lame man on his couch.

"Ah, teacher," he said, "this is a great honor to my mean abode."

"I'm glad to be here, Wu, but sorry to hear you are not well. What's the trouble?"

"There is no trouble. God keeps my heart singing. I died once in the mountain-top, but He sent you to give me life again. Then He put within me the life that His Son came to give us. Now I see the long life not very far ahead. God calls me, and but for one thing my heart would be full of joy."

"What makes my brother speak so? Who knows but this life will be long yet?"

"No, doctor. The deadness that has made this leg hang useless has now come to the other also. You have taught me not to fear the dragon spirit, but something drags at my back even now and I hear the call. The Lord wants my spirit. But my little ones are tender and need care and counsel. Has the doctor time this morning to hear me?"

"Yes, my brother may speak."

"My wife and the boy will sorrow when I go, though it has never been given me to do much for them and I am only an expense to them now. But they can get on without me. The evil generally avoids busy people.

These two little ones—what will become of them? And how will Mey Wing come to her own? But the teacher is too busy to think of my little affairs."

"No, no. Go on, if I can help in any way."

"It is for Mey Wing. The teacher has thought she was just as the others of my children. But she is a magnolia bud on a willow tree. If the teacher does not consider the words of his stupid younger brother too trifling, it would ease my heart to tell the story.

"When San Dsi was in his seventh feast, I was selling my goods some forty li from home, and reached home as the moon was rising in the seventh watch. My poor house stood on the outskirts of our little village. As I was about to enter it a party overtook me and asked the distance to Tao Ing Hien. I answered them that it was about one more day's journey for men who walked fast. Then one of them began to scold and insist he would not go any farther without more money. I saw that they were wheelbarrow-men. A woman was on the barrow and she began to scold, then entreat them to go on, promising that when they reached the city her husband would surely give them double wages for one more day's travel. But they sat and smoked their pipes, refusing to go on. She began to cry in distress, and I went to the men to ask why they were doing so. They said the woman was the wife of a scholar who had left her some months past to seek for a school in Ching Jeo Fu, and afterwards she hired these men to convey her thither. When they arrived the husband had gone on to Tao Ing Hien, but leaving her

no money, and it was not till they were two days out that they found she had not enough to pay them. They would not chase fox-fire around the country and get burned for their pains. The woman's baggage would not pawn for enough to pay what was already due them, and they would take her no farther.

"You know, sir," said Wu, "our scholars, though the jewels of the realm, are often without money for rice."

Yes, the doctor knew. When a vacancy occurred among his helpers, where a man of literary standing was required, any number of applications would be received from graduate scholars who were willing to assist for three to four dollars per month. Wu continued his story.

"The woman was in great distress and shame. She was evidently of some culture and felt her unaided position very keenly, and finally she appealed to him with such helplessness that he sought his wife's counsel. Her woman's sympathy was touched by the other's need, and the end was that the stranger was received into their home to stay until Wu, in his rounds, should visit the city and make inquiries for the husband. When he did so, it was to find that he had drifted on, no one could say whither. Sending letters cost the wage of a man's day. The poor wife delayed sending word back to her friends, partly because of the expense and partly from shame. Finally she died in their home, leaving a little one to their care. Wu then wrote to her friends, but received no answer. Either the address was im-

perfect or the letter-carrying firm failed to deliver it, or the friends did not wish to undertake the care and expense of a girl-baby. She stayed in their home, and the younger children never knew she was not their own. Now that they were among strangers none but the foster-father and -mother knew her story. For eleven years she had been in their home. At first they had kept her with the thought that when friends claimed her they would get back what they had expended for the mother. Afterward she found her place in their affections, and they would have been loth to give her up. Now, however, he felt that they had hardly done right in not taking more active measures to find her own people. Her mother had told them that her own brother was a rising man in line of official promotion, and she had put much reliance on his assistance, when she should get strong enough to seek him. The names of this brother and of her husband had been carefully preserved, and he saw clearly that his duty was to make an effort to find them and restore Mey Wing to her own blood. The doctor was in touch with many prominent men of Wu's people, and had influence. Would he be willing to assist in the search?

The little girls had stayed outside while the man talked. They were called, and when they came in, the doctor, observing closely, with the interest roused by the story, saw plainly a difference in feature and a certain grace in Mey Wing's movements, absent in those of the little daughter of uncultured parents. While the father made occasion for calling them by

speaking of household matters, a plan formed rapidly in the other's mind. It was evident that the lame man had good grounds for his forebodings. A short time would end his journey of this life. This would for the time prevent his wife from earning money. San Dsi's earnings would not go far toward supporting the family. It was time, at any rate, they should be relieved from the care of the little one whom they had so generously succored while they were able. So he spoke when the girls went out:

"It is a strange story that my brother tells. I will gladly do anything in my power to help. But the search may be long. The people of Han are many, and often girl-babies are accounted well disposed of if they can be lost. In the mean time the two little ones are idle and not learning. I know it is not the custom in this country to teach girls to know books, but the great Book teaches us to give all the same training as far as we can. My proposal is this: Let them go to the school beside the hospital and study. The winter is coming on and it is cold here for little bodies. The mother can pay for food for Ma Dsi there as here, and you know she will have good care. As for Mey Wing, let me share my brother's burdens and provide for her until her own kindred shall claim her."

Wu had learned late the grace of receiving cheerfully. Yet his natural independence, fostered by many years of rough contact with all sorts of his people, made it hard for him to consent at once to such radical proceedings. He lay silent for a time, then answered:

"The teacher's heart is always right and his thoughts are full of wisdom. Yet my poor head is not clear. It is a great matter that is proposed. If my elder brother will not think his stupid disciple too ungrateful for such unmerited kindness, he will let me have a day or two to think it over."

The second day Mrs. Wu called on the doctor's wife, bringing as presents for the children some of the toys which Wu was still making when he had strength. After chatting a while on other matters she approached her real object.

"Did the learned lady know that the doctor had called at their humble home?"

Yes, she had heard with much solicitude of Mr. Wu's poor health. She hoped he was not suffering much.

Ah, yes, he was very poorly. The doctor's medicine was powerful and truly was driving out the poisonous humors. They would be glad to have him call again when he could spare time from his many labors. They knew, though, they could not expect him to come often. But about the little ones in their house. The doctor's kind heart had led him to speak of school for them. It was more than they deserved. And she and he were on their knees thankful for such kind thoughtfulness. But he could not spare them from before his eyes. Certainly they were worthless and much in the way, but he had been accustomed to their presence and would miss them so much. Would the learned one condescend to convey this poor message to the doctor with her best thanks?

Yes, the doctor's wife would tell him. And the doctor looked at his own little ones singing noisily in his back study and understood. It was not for long that Wu had the pleasure of their company. He failed rapidly. His friends did all that could be done, and when his spirit departed to its new, untrammeled life, they carried the narrow wooden casement of the worn-out fleshy tenement and laid it in its earthen abiding-place in the little God's Acre, where the bamboos waved their feathery leaves.

Then the doctor's wife called on the stricken widow. Oh, the pity it is that sinning children of the Infinite Father, wandering in the realms of evil, cast themselves out of one of His lesser Edens, by failing to live out the sacred ties which join man and wife into one. Rich is the woman who may mourn a faithful and loving husband and out of the abundant stores of her heart's tender memories recall the years of true companionship. The East rejoices not in the chivalric ideals of the West. The knightly care and courteous devotion which is the flower of Christian homes is not common in the Old World, where woman is expected to wait on the beck of her lord; but the laws of God will work out even there sometimes, and long companionship ripen into affection for a knightly soul, though it be encased in a limping body. So the doctor's wife and the peddler's widow, coming from antipodes of longitude and ideals and training, found common meeting-ground in thankfulness for the faithful devotion of a loved husband. The sympathy of the West opened the heart of the East,

and the barriers between the New and Old melted in tears of understanding.

Afterward the rooms were given up. The doctor's proposal about the girls was accepted. The mother returned to her work. San Dsi and his donkey took up their abode near her. The names of Mey Wing's father and uncle were preserved by the doctor, but his inquiries failed to result in finding them, and the two girls grew up in the school. The lady became their guide and teacher, as she was the friend of Chao Ju, but the two schools were separated and the boys and girls saw little of each other, except in public gatherings.

When Chao Ju was eighteen he went from the school and became a helper in the medicine-room at the hospital. This was the doctor's way of testing boys who thought they would like to have the standing and reputation of the foreign physicians. Honesty, promptness, faithfulness to the little duties, kindness and patience for the sick, as well as Christian knowledge and adaptability,—all these must be shown or the doctor had no time to spend on their further training. They had many opportunities to peddle out medicines in such doses as they were constantly preparing under direction, and many a one thought to line his cash-box in this way, but sooner or later it was known, and another prospective physician went to his own place. Long-nailed scholars would take the vacant berth, but when the use of knife and nailbrush was insisted on and heavy boxes were required to be moved and opened, they would give it up and go out, assuming

again the gown with the long sleeves to protect the hands from rough contact. Hopeful scions of official families would aspire to the honor, but few of them stayed long after they learned that regular hours were insisted upon, that opium was not tolerated on the premises, and their utensils must be cleansed and put away by themselves before work-hours closed.

No one who had any knowledge of the Chinese character and of the doctor's tenacity of purpose experienced any surprise over the results. The phenomenon was the patience which allowed the constant stream of applicants to pass through his sieve when so few were big enough in character to lodge. If one would seek for a parallel, he may find it in the snow-fed mountain stream which flows merrily toward the fertile valleys, but ever loses its water in the consuming sand of the plains. The glowing sun which starts the waters on their way finds its counterpart in the fierce heat of competitive life among the millions of the black-haired people. The fertile vales are the lucrative positions, and the never-satiated sands are fit emblems of the dry, withering, blasting forces of deceit and greed and sensuality.

Chao Ju was forced into this current by constraining powers new to his people. The Eye of the Father still pervaded his consciousness. The sweetness and docility of the Child still captivated his fancy, and the desire grew in him that he might some day be fitted to go out, like Him, on a ministry of help and teaching and healing. The superintendent of the school where

he had spent six years watched the boys always to see, if he could, into what they would grow; and when the doctor, weary of the loss from the sands, asked if he knew of any good boy who would like to enter on a medical training, Chao Ju was given his opportunity. And having entered the race, he stayed. Year by year he advanced steadily through the grades of attendant, student, and assistant. Week by week he sat in his place in the chapel while the preacher opened to the congregation the Word of Truth and broke to their understanding the Bread of Life, and Chao Ju fed and grew strong. But, almost unconsciously, another force was coming into his nature through the years. His seat was with the older boys in the front corner, in the pews that faced the pulpit from the side of the house. From this point they could see the whole of the audience. The corresponding seat on the other side was occupied not by maidens of their own age. That, of course, would have been to invite trouble. With the preacher directly in line between them, how could they control eyes and thoughts? A wise forethought had provided that any unpremeditated straying of eyes should be met from the other corner by the uncompromising wrinkles of mothers and the widows of the church. The front seats on that side were given to the smaller girls. The young married women came behind them in the center, and over next to the windows sat the ones who in all countries must be guarded from hunters, who in turn, receive those wounds which put an end to their further roaming.

Prettiest among them and brightest of eye, Mey Wing always sat in the same place, and not once did the boys catch her doing anything that could be interpreted as an attempt to attract their attention. This was more than could be said of some of her companions. The result was seen in the chaffing talk of the young men. The names of most of the girls could be heard used in jest, but she was rarely referred to. Then her name was not used, but she was referred to as the Mey Hua (Rose). Yet any one of them all would have thought more of her smile than of the Sunday dinner.

Chao Ju was among the young men what she was in her circle—easily the leader. Tall and strong, even in feature, and serene in expression, quietly courteous in manner, yet with a certain confidence in himself and alertness of movement which was not natural to his race, but had been imbibed, rather than copied, from the doctor, he was a striking figure whether he sat and listened or moved among others. As boy and man he had admired Mey Wing since he first entered the school. And as she developed into young womanhood and proved to be not only fair to look upon but an intellectual leader, her very reserve and self-constraint proved additional stimulus to interest and admiration. I do not think that he ever neglected the worship of the hour to look at or think of her, but for years he was always conscious of her face set in its frame of quiet reserve, which even the lady's gracious friendship did not entirely melt away. If his thoughts carried him any further, he spoke of it to no one. I do not think

he realized into what he was drifting. Mey Wing on her part allowed no suggestion of special thought of any man to be made to her or for her. Those matters are all left to the parents in that land. As to what was in her heart I never questioned until one evening she came into our house to consult an old lady, whose home was with us, on some matter. It so happened that while she was there some young men came to see me. Two came first, with whom, in our presence, she chatted for a time with the freedom of one who had grown up in contact with American ideas. But when Chao Ju came in the rich coloring was slightly deepened. Reserve marked her few words, and she soon excused herself and withdrew, much to the regret of the young men, who would gladly have availed themselves of the unusual opportunity to enjoy the company of this favorite, but usually unapproachable, fellow-pupil.

Contrary to all usage, she was still unengaged. Most Chinese girls are betrothed by their parents in infancy. Many go out at once to the home of their future mothers-in-law and grow up in the home with their husband-to-be. Few go past the age of ten without being bound to one whom they know not, and all are settled in the same way before they go far in their teens. Suitors there had been for Mey Wing's hand, many of them. But in her childhood the Wus hardly felt that their claim on her would justify them in giving her away. Afterward, when Mr. Wu was waiting for his summons, one of the striking marks of his breaking away from the trammels of ancient customs was given

when he said one day to his wife, "Let Mey Wing be free until she grows up, and consult her before binding her for life." So the gentle foster-father, though dead, was still the protector of her young womanhood.

But while in so many respects Mey Wing was satisfying the best desires of friends and teachers, in one thing needful she had disappointed them. She had never acknowledged the claims of the Christ, whom all her fellow-pupils gladly professed. Why this should be was a great puzzle. She was gentle and teachable; was well acquainted with her Bible, and always sat reverently quiet through religious services. But no one could say whether this was because of respect for the services, or for her instructors, or for herself. Perhaps when she was a girl, when others of her age were joining the church, if some one had understood her and dealt with her separately, and with sympathy, she might have been led. For I think that then it was a dislike to do just what others were doing that held her back more than anything else. She allowed this to dominate her acts until she, realizing how untenable a position it was, cast about for some other support for her self-isolation. She had not learned the true story of her mother, and thought herself only the daughter of Wu, who had gone before, and of his wife, who held at her work of children's nurse. She knew, however, that not all of her expenses were paid by Mrs. Wu. She was sensitively aware that she was indebted to the foreigners for her education, and while she was in one sense grateful for this,—for she realized

its advantages,—yet there was also a recoil of loyalty toward the ideals and worship of her own people and nation.

The lady invited all the girls to her parlor one evening to look over some newly arrived pictures of foreign travel, thinking it would add to the interest of geography study. Mey Wing perhaps was not very well. At any rate, she did not get ready to go. Her sister, Ma Dsi, remonstrated.

"Come, sister. Teacher says the pictures are very fine."

"I'm tired of seeing pictures of foreign places and hearing their beauty emphasized. Why don't they bring us pictures of our own country with its famous plains and sacred mountains? Are not the cities which our own people have built as great as their cathedrals and ruins?"

"But, sister, the teacher will be sorry if you stay away."

"Ma Dsi, I'm sick of this whole life. Must we always fear to displease these teachers from across the sea, who despise from their calm superiority our own great teachers who have kept our nation for these thousands of years while these people count their history by the hundreds only? No; go on and look at their pictures if you want to, and forget your own ancestors and lower yourself by making light of the noble deeds of people of our own blood, if you can. I have no heart to do so."

"Why, Mey Wing, our teachers never speak so of our people!"

"No, they do not. But the whole tenor of their work teaches it. We cannot follow them without rejecting the ancients."

"Sister, what causes you to speak so? I do not understand you."

"There now, little sister. Don't let my irritableness worry you. I know I'm not grateful as I should be. You go on, and I'll go to bed and sleep off this headache, and we'll both feel better in the morning. Ask the teacher to excuse me, please."

The walls of the city, thirty-seven miles around, surrounded much more ground than was actually occupied by the business and homes. Part of this territory was taken up by gardens and small farms, or by wooded hills surmounted by temples, or bamboo-shaded vales in whose depths lay shrines. A large portion consisted of rolling hills covered with grassy mounds, beneath which lay the bones or dust of successive generations. The number of inhabitants in this city of the dead was greater than the number of living. Hither the pious came to offer their prayers and sacrifices at graves of parents and ancestors. Since the war of the Tai Ping rebellion, in which the city was nearly destroyed, its population had been recruited from all sides, until customs of all provinces could be observed within its walls. The coffins of Ningpo people were not covered with great heaps of earth, but enclosed with brick, plastered on the outside and painted white. In one

end a hole was always left so that the spirit of the dead, the one of the three spirits that made its abode in the body's resting-place, might freely go in and out.

In the spring of each year came the Tsing Ming, the festival of spirit-worship, of ancestral remembrance. The pious heaped the grave-mounds higher and repaired the sod, crowning all with a green sod if possible, in which were sticks holding tiny streamers of red paper. The dusk of evening was specked by fires burning paper money and implements for use in the spirit realms. The morning hours were resonant with moans and outcries of wives and children lamenting loudly, dolorously detailing the virtues of the departed and the woes of the mourners. And to honor and pacify those forlorn wraiths whose descendants failed in piety or had forgotten their place, benevolent associations performed the rites in wholesale lots on the eve of All Saints' Day. A generous conflagration and general scattering of paper, coins, and tinsel ornaments allayed the resentment of these liable-to-be-disgrunted forbears and brought peace for another year.

Strange, trifling, ludicrous! Yes, perhaps so—to us. But terribly real and sorrowful to them. And Mey Wing, in her eighteenth year, after seven years of Christian teaching, broke away that spring from the restraints of the school and the training of the mission and the beliefs of all her acquaintances, and was found one morning wailing at the grave of her lame foster-father. Her passionate heart, starved for love by her own self-isolation, fixed itself in yearning return on the

memory of the gentle-voiced man who had ever been kind to her and about whom childish recollections wove an additional halo of goodness and protecting care. No one had taken his place. If there was a stronger love in her heart it was as yet unrevealed to herself, and she shrank from intimations she did not understand. Her reserve had cut her off from any in whom she might confide. The drag of centuries of superstition behind her and the undercurrent of billows of degradation around her pulled at her spirit as had the dragon spirit at the maimed limb of the father she was seeking, and in the early dawn she slipped out past the astonished gateman and in desperation fled to where the silent bamboo stood guard over the burying-spot, casting herself and her sorrows on the ground over his dust. Ma Dsi, following in haste and dread, found her there, and, held back in awe of the storm sweeping over her proud beautiful sister, heard, not as an eavesdropper, but as a ministering spirit hovering near, the cry of the groping, lonely, weary-winged soul:

"O my father, if thou art here, give ear to the cry of the little one to whom thou wast always kind. I have not worshipped before thy tomb in years that have past, but if thou art a spirit, thou knowest my heart and seest that it was not because thy child has ever forgotten to cherish and love thee. What dost thou need in thy spirit home? Speak and I will go naked or on my knees and beg from door to door but that the refining fires shall carry it to thee in their smoking incense. But, oh, listen to my call and turn not away

thine ear. For my heart is sore and bleeding. It weeps and knows no peace, so that my eyes run tears in my night-watches, and in the midst of companions I am lonely, ah, so lonely! O my father, woe is me! If thou, O blessed one, hast found access to the holy ones who give joy and sorrow, with whom are the secrets of life and who are hidden from our clay-bound eyes, plead with them for me. Tell them of my heaviness, of the darkness that dwells within me, of the sorrow that bounds my days, of the hungering heart that finds no love to feed on. Ask them why I must suffer so when others are satisfied and happy. O my father, words fail me—where art thou? Even thou dost not respond. Woe, woe! Bitterness overflows my heart and grief chokes my words. Aiah, aiah! I have lost thee! I have lost thee, my last refuge! My own sins weigh me down and thou hearest not."

And she lay prone on the earth with her hands stretched over the sodded mound. The dampness of the undried dew clung to her garments. In the absorption of her seeking she saw not nor heard when Ma Dsi silently hastened away, but waited between hope and despair for some sign of guidance. Neither did she notice when the lady came silently up the path to where the sun was casting lacework of light through the quivering bamboo leaves over the girl's form.

The light of the seeking Saviour shone from the elder woman's eyes, and the love of Christ constrained her as she lovingly touched the cold forehead and said in tones that breathed heavenly pity:

"My child."

The poor maiden was like many another who sends up petition with tears and groaning and yet looks not for answer. Not realizing that any one was near, she started fearfully at the sound, terrified as Endor's witch at the result of her own call. Then, seeing the loving face so tenderly seeking her weal, the tension of night vigils and morning despair broke away, and as a tired child she laid her head in the lady's lap and they sat in the glory of the morning sun, risen in his brightness, while the elder told the younger the story of the Saviour's tomb and of the angel's question, "Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen!" And faith came with healing touch into the heart of the girl. She felt that her Father in Heaven had heard her wandering cry and had sent His message of peace. And she walked home with her hand in that of the lady, and her faith resting in Jesus.

CHAPTER V.

THE BETROTHAL AND THE DISAPPEARANCE.

FARMER SUNG hoed his straggling wheat until he grew tired. It was not an unusual occurrence for Farmer Sung to grow tired early in the day. The sun was hot and the weeds many. The ground seemed hard, too, and he decided that the hoe must be dull. He glanced toward the house and saw the old mother and aunt going into his ell, so he concluded that matters were all right there, and walked across the fields to the village, a mile away, to get his hoe sharpened. He might have done the work himself at home. His father had kept tools for such work in the house, and the ground rarely ever got hard when he was working the farm, which he had earned and handed down to his son. But Sung the younger had a mind above hoeing, and digging, and planting, and pruning, so the farm did not yield so well after the father's death.

The blacksmith was busy, and as he never saw Sung in a hurry, his work waited. So the farmer went across to the tea-house and paid half a cent for some tea, and three-tenths of a cent for some tobacco, and the other two-tenths for some salted watermelon seeds. He thought of paying one-tenth for some peanuts, but he threw dice with the boy and lost; so he paid his money and ate his watermelon seeds. At the end of an hour

the weather and other topics of public interest had been pretty thoroughly discussed and the hoe was sharp. So he paid half a cent for the work and went back across the fields to be in time for dinner. At the door a neighbor woman met him and courtesied. "Congratulations to you, Neighbor Sung. May your house be extended."

A faint wail from within explained her meaning. He set the hoe against the mud wall of the house and drew his pipe from his girdle to fill it before answering. It was his first child, and he did not know just how to meet the occasion. That he was confused was evident when he offered the woman the first draw of smoke. Then he asked, "Is it a boy?"

"Kiang Yin has blessed your home with a pearl who will follow her mother's feet."

The disappointment was visible on the young man's face, but he thanked the woman for her kindness as she went home. Later, when he spoke with the little mother, he sought not to conceal his displeasure. She, too, had wanted a boy, yet her arms and bosom yearned for the little one, and as it lay soft and warm, close to her heart, she could not but love it, and its cries put her a-fluttering like a bird whose nestlings are disturbed. They irritated him. His pipe failed to soothe as usual.

But the days passed and the little one grew. The firstborn, she was a wonder and mystery and ineffable joy to her mother. The father tolerated her, grudgingly at first, afterwards with more pleasure than he

would admit, but her name always set forth the manner of her reception. They called her Tao Di, and that means, "Praying for a younger brother." To men and to gods this was an intimation of their expectation. But the brother did not come, and the girl and her name remained. Gradually she came into the place reserved for the boy.

When she was three and Chao Ju was five years old, their parents betrothed them to each other. The acres of the two families were watered by the same pond. Each was an only child. When these facts were laid before the geomancer, together with the dates of their birth, a lock of the hair of each, and some other material, he was soon satisfied that their horoscopes were favorable to a union; a lucky day was named, and he received a fee for such pleasing assistance. Henceforth they were bound to each other, but she remained in her mother's home till she should be grown. When Chao Ju entered the school they met no more, and their development was along lines radically different.

The farm work had become still more irksome to Sung. The cold of winter was hard to endure and the heat of summer was oppressive. The spring labors made him weary, and although he complained of the scantiness of the harvests, the task of gathering them was unwelcome. He decided that his abilities would find better play in keeping an inn, and he rented a cross-roads house. The front wall was of brick, and bordered the street. All other walls were of adobe and

the roof of straw. The whole front was taken up by a long, narrow room, having a wide opening on the street, boarded at night, open by day. In one end was the kitchen, and in the other a number of square tables for use of guests. Through the room went beasts or carts to the courtyard, on three sides of which were sleeping- and feed-rooms, except that the central room in rear was reserved for a reception-room, presided over by the god of riches. In one end stood the coffin which Sung had prepared against the time when he should need it, and in the opposite corner was a straw pallet for occasional use. These were covered with dust, but the chairs and table in the center were generally brushed for services.

In this place Tao Di grew to womanhood. Her mother did most of the work and the girl was assistant. To Sung it was a favorable place for the cultivation of his germs of indolence. He sat behind a counter in a corner, where he sold tobacco and some other trifles, or smoked and talked with his guests. Many of those who stopped there were users of the black food, as opium was called in contradistinction to the white rice, and a room was fitted for their special use. This was against the earnest remonstrance of the wife, but Sung was set in the thought of making the money which can always be obtained for semi-illicit goods. Opium was kept on hand for his customers, and before many months of his landlord life passed he had—for business reasons, he said—learned to smoke occasionally with guests. And so in his indolent way he drifted gradually into

the habit and became a confirmed "pipe-hitter." More and more of the burdens fell on the wife, until she became bent and broken in body and soured in temper. Chiding her husband did not help matters. Remonstrating with him had no effect. Finally, partly in spite, partly to quiet pain and nervousness, she, too, sought the deadening drug, and the better part of the business failed month by month. But the opium-rooms were well patronized, and that class of customers came to his inn.

The girl's character partook of the nature of her surroundings. No one can say what she might have become in different circumstances. But everything dragged her down. Poverty haunted them. What they made they smoked up. Indolence walked with irregularity. The vicious ones who gathered there brought to her knowledge, evil of all kinds. Decent people shunned them. She, too, learned finally, in reckless bravado, to use the pipe. Yet she was naturally bright and attractive, and proved a magnet to draw the young men from neighboring towns and even from the city to her father's house. She knew no better life.

Chao Ju remembered the bonds in which he was held, and, as he came to realize what a life with such a wife would mean, tried through his friends to have the girl brought under better influences. But her presence in the opium resort secured too much custom for Sung to relinquish the gain before he must, and nothing could be done. Seeing more plainly what such a life must

mean to the girl, Chao Ju offered to fulfill the betrothal early and take her to his home, but this also was declined, and he could do nothing. Then Mey Wing came into his life, and, though perhaps he did not know why it was so, the bonds placed upon him in childhood by parents became odious chains which cut into his quickened manhood. But there was no escape. Law and custom held him and her, while each dreaded and disliked the other.

Among those who stopped at the inn, came one day a party of young men, going to pass the season of the Dragon Festival in Nanking. They were the sons of well-to-do parents, and had more money than manhood or wisdom. They found Sung's place fit in very well with their ideas of having a good time, and delayed over a day, dividing the time between sleeping, eating, drinking liquor, smoking opium, and gambling.

When they went away their score at the inn was met by their winnings from its landlord, and they carried some of his cash with them. This was taken from what Tao Di had saved for a year for a visit to the city at this same festival. She had enjoyed the stay of the travelers. Her blunted moral sense did not revolt at their coarseness and profligacy. They were of the type from which her surroundings had hitherto cut her off. She willingly waited on them, and enjoyed the badinage and ribaldry which passed, feeling no womanly shame at what she saw and heard.

Her mother had still some remnants of her sense of propriety and mother-love, and sought to hold the girl

back from such association, but her weak course had lost for her control over the wayward, untrained daughter. Her father sottishly sacrificed his child's honor to his desire to please his rich guests. Their talk about the festival whetted her desire to see its wonders, and she made up her mind to see them at that time. When they were gone and she found her money had been used, her resentment was all against her father. Her heart burned hot as she thought of the pleasure thus forfeited, and a storm of angry words did not exhaust the fury. That night she lay awake and planned, and the next morning while the others still slept she rose, took her small pack of clothes and some opium which she could sell for enough to pay her expenses, and started to the city. She got a man to carry the bundle, but she herself walked the ninety li to her mother's sister, who lived just outside the gate.

The next morning the city was in gala dress. Most of the shops and business houses were closed. The streets were full of jostling, chattering, eager crowds. The slight breeze kept many dragon kites up. Gay streamers floated from many tall posts and door-handles. Curiously cut sheets of bright red, yellow, or purple paper, were posted everywhere. In the evening there would be a great procession headed by bands of music, in which would be an immense painted wooden dragon, perhaps a hundred feet long. Each joint would be upheld by a man whose head and shoulders would be within it, or hidden by trappings. In the midst of lanterns and torches, with shouting and

laughter of multitudes, swaying and writhing, it would be borne through miles of streets. Then it would be put away until another cycle would bring the day of recalling and appeasing the great dragon.

Tao Di arrayed herself in her best, but felt that it was very poor. Her resentment was undiminished, but she felt oppressed by the strangeness and the crowds. In spite of the aunt's remonstrance, she was abroad, unattended, early in the day. She feared to meet her former acquaintances; especially did she wish to avoid Chao Ju. And she hoped that in some way she might meet the strange travelers.

Wandering about the streets, she grew very weary and hungry. Chancing upon an open door, within which she saw people sitting on half-filled benches, she ventured in, and finding that she was not unwelcome, sat down. A man in the front was speaking. At first she paid no attention to what he was saying, but curiously watched the passing crowds. As she rested she became more hungry. Her attention was called to the man who was speaking by hearing the word "bread." He was saying, "He gave them bread from heaven to eat." She wondered if he had any to sell, and looked to see if any were on the table before him. Then she heard again: "But my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven and giveth life unto the world."

She was listening intently when a stir at the door caused her to look in that direction. Chao Ju entered

and walked quietly to the front. He had not noticed her, and with a sickening fear of his presence she slipped out and hid in the crowds.

The words she had heard remained with her, and she wondered what they might mean. She caught a glimpse of a mountain-peak of truth and hope through a sudden rift, but the clouds of sin and self had closed again, and she was without a guide.

She wandered aimlessly along the streets, which were all new to her, carried with a crowd, attracted by some gayety or driven by restlessness. She bought a light lunch at a street stand, not caring to return to meet the displeasure of her aunt, and fearing possible restraint.

As she started on she saw in the street ahead signs of a disturbance. A drunken weaver had been taken by some soldiers, and was being pushed along the streets towards their camp. The news spread quickly among his fellow-workmen, and the guild members rushed to his rescue. Men hurried by her towards the crowd coming, rolling cues under their caps and removing superfluous clothing in preparation for a street brawl. The girl pressed close to the building at one side of the narrow street, to avoid the clash. Struggling, clamoring, and gesticulating, the opposing forces crowded by. She could not see the outcome. On one side of her was a fat old man carrying a piece of pork. On the other was a woman with incense for burning at Buddha's shrine. Two others were jammed against them by the press. One was a child whose head was wrapped in a red flannel, a flaming signal of what was

seen below, its face blotched with the open sores of smallpox. The second was a tall Mohammedan. The pork soiled one sleeve and the child's face brushed the other.

"Heh," he exclaimed in protest. "Swine's meat and a Ma Dsi."

He was disgusted with both, but was much more concerned over the grease-spot than over contagion's touch.

As the pestiferous odor of the disease ascended hot into Tao Di's face she shivered slightly and tried to recoil. But she recalled that though she had not been inoculated as most children were, her father had paid the price of a calf for a charm which would keep off the disease, that her face might not be marred by its pits. She felt that the amulet was in its place, and dismissed the matter from her mind. The street she was on was interrupted by a hill whose base was bounded by a red wall fifteen to twenty feet high. Over this she could see tops of buildings rising in succeeding rows until the top of the hill was crowned by two temples covered with porcelain tiles, red, and purple, and white. It was the great temple to Kong Fu Dsi,* where were placed tablets to himself, his parents and his illustrious disciples. Its portals were closed except at the times of spring and autumn sacrifices. Even her untrained mind was stirred to a certain racial awe as she stood by the spot dedicated to the nation's holy

* Confucius.

sage, "Chief among the Myriad Great Ones," the "Exalted Teacher of the Wise Immortals."

While she lingered a donkey came trotting around the corner. Its driver urged it forward to the entrance of the gatekeeper's lodge. Its rider, a dignified teacher, dismounted, and after some parley went inside. Some curiosity was manifested by the onlookers, and this was augmented when, as he appeared again, accompanied by the keeper with the keys, four sedan chairs came hastily around the same corner. The bearers hastened their steps almost to a run at a sign from the teacher.

They stood at a small side gate, and while it was being opened four women, two foreigners and two native women, stepped quickly out and started inside. As soon as the bystanders realized that the influence of the foreigners had opened the gate, a rush was made to gain ingress with the party. A dozen or more crowded in before the scolding keeper could slip the bolt into place. Among these was Tao Di. Curiosity led her near to the group, and in the scramble she was in before she realized what was going on. Somewhat frightened at first, her audacity quickly returned. She had not seen foreigners before, and she followed them wonderingly, staring and trying to listen to their words. But they only made sounds that to her were unintelligible, and she wondered if they really could understand each other. As they paused in the wide Hall of the Master she crowded up close in front. The

teacher was explaining the great tablet overhead. He spoke in her own tongue, and she listened.

"It means," he said, "that the fame of Kong the Master shall extend through myriad ages, and his lustre exceeds that of thousands of suns."

But when the strangers spoke together again in their own language she forgot that they were human, and felt of the white hand of the nearer one as she would have examined a strange stone. It was warm and live, and she drew back startled. The lady noticed her, and sought to speak kindly, but she was afraid, and shrank away against the younger of the two Chinese attendants.

"Mey Wing," said the lady, "please tell her she need not be afraid."

The two girls looked at each other. One was rough and uncouth in spite of her pitiful attempts at finery, half bold, half frightened, wholly defiant, as a wild thing; the other gentle and courteous, with a face showing not less of strength, but more of peace and character.

To the one Chao Ju was bound by law; to the other he was drawn by love. Neither had previously known of the other's existence, nor did their contact extend any further, for when Mey Wing would have spoken, the poor girl sullenly turned away and kept at a distance until the gates were opened for their exit. She crowded out with them, and almost ran against Chao Ju. He did not notice her, as he was waiting for the lady, for whom he had a message, and she slipped into a

dark corner and watched them. She noticed his handsome figure and easy carriage, and while she dreaded his control she could not but admire him. She shrank farther back, that he might not see her unattended.

A wave of new feeling came over her as she saw his deference toward Mey Wing and the flush on the latter's face as she acknowledged his greeting. Womanly instinct caused her to realize suddenly the chasm between herself and them. Anger toward them and her father seized her, and she fled from them, her breast filled with rebellion. Chao Ju caught a glimpse of her as she passed, and, with an ejaculation of surprise, started toward her. But she heard and saw, and, mingling in the throng, turned a corner and ran in terror of him.

He was not sure that he had recognized her, and knowing it was not seemly to pursue her in any case, turned away, tortured anew by the galling of the betrothal chain.

Suddenly Tao Di found herself confronted by a band of flashily attired youths, and heard them accosting her:

"Well met, well met, little sister! Were you running to meet us? You must be as glad as we are at this good fortune. How is your honorable father? Where have you left your silken chair? Now we have found our guide. The gods have heard our prayers and sent us a divinity to lead us to victory! Now our

dragon boat will surely win. Thanks to thee, Ju Yuen!* Sie Sie, Da Pu Sa."

She recognized the travelers whom she had met at the inn, among others whom she had not known. She knew that it was beyond all bounds of propriety that they should thus accost her on the street or that she should speak to them, but in her savage bitterness she threw aside all restraint. Rallying her depressed spirits, she answered their raillery in like manner.

"Come," they cried, "we waste precious time. We are late now. We lingered too long in the noble hall of your father. We were bewitched by twinkling lilies and the enchanting of a flute-toned voice. We have secured a fleet dragon boat and have but just completed our crew. But we still lack a guiding spirit. Come, thou shalt sit in our boat's end and sing to us of the prowess and valor of Kuh Yuen. The light of thine eyes shall kindle our souls, the gladness of thy voice shall quicken our strokes, the crown of victory shall be on thy brow while the ten myriads of beholders shall sing thy beauty."

They were flushed by wine and drunk with riotous spirit of the festival or they would not have dared to propose so lawless an innovation. She was filled with the bitterness of her position and the recklessness of the self-loathing outcast or she would have put her fingers in her ears and escaped for her life. But she went with them.

Many a curious glance followed them as they passed

* "Thanks, O great god."

boisterously over the long street, through the damp, dark-tunneled gateway, elbowing among the increasing crowds. In the boat-house the rowers stripped for the contest. Over Tao Di they threw a silken robe, blue and scarlet; on her head they put a tinsel crown. They whitened her face and stained her lips. In her hands they placed embroidered flags, then they gave her the seat in the stern of their boat. In the bow sat three men with fife and flute and drum.

Loud plaudits from the multitude rent the air as the boats came from cover into the open waters of the canal, and the buzz of a hundred voices made a new phonetic background against which ordinary sounds lost their clearness. The partially deaf heard more clearly than those of clear hearing. The preparations were brief. The contestants lined up, and, when above the confusion the brazen blast of the official trumpet was heard, all started. It was not scientific. It was a contest of endurance and strength and wits, but not of skill. Yet the excitement was intense. The drums beat, the fifes shrilled, and the guns and fireworks added their maddening confusion, until clouds of smoke met over the water and at times clouded the view. The canal was too narrow to accommodate all the boats abreast, and collisions and fouls were frequent. The course was short. At the turning-post two boats were overturned and their crews struggled out as best they could. Some were drowned in spite of efforts to help them, but the other boats paused not to see, but swept around back past the starting-point to the goal.

When Tao Di appeared in her boat she was greeted with roars of laughter and applause. No one suspected the truth; all thought it was a man dressed in woman's clothing. Her rowers were all strangers in the city, and as the boat had no distinctive mark she was chosen to give it a name, and it became for the race, "The Woman." She was second to safely round the post and start goalward, but in a few rods the third boat drew up and passed her, its rowers using every ounce of their strength. The spirit of rivalry and victory flowed through Tao Di's every vein and pulsed to the end of her finger-tips. She was timid at first, but when she realized the mistake of the crowd she gave free vent to the riot of her mind. On the homeward way she gave rein to the excitement. She sang the songs of her country life; then chanted the prayers to the god of the rivers; she called to the men, keeping time with her body to the strokes of the oars. The flags in her hands measured the length of the sweep. As they neared the goal she rose to her feet; the players ceased their noise, and clear and sharp amid the clangor sounded her voice,—

"Row, men, row, strain to your oars,
The spirits of the air behold you;
What care ye though tales be told
When praise and plaudits enfold you?"

Among the crowds lining the banks shouts arose, "The Woman, The Woman! Look how she flies! There, she's second now. Watch her again! Taels to coppers she'll go in first."

Then to the ears of the men in the boat came again the clear, inspiriting cry,—

"Keep to the right; bend, men, bend!
Sing to the praise of The Woman's boat.
See our rivals' last boat fall behind!
Behold Kuh Yuen! Victorious we float!"

The tension was over. The goal was passed. The spectators thundered applause. But Tao Di sank back in her seat, weary and sick. The intoxication of the hour was over. The danger of her surroundings came to her. Her mood changed. She hated the men with her who had degraded her publicly. She must escape from them.

As they neared the boat-house she saw among the bystanders Chao Ju and his uncle. He seemed to haunt her that day. He recognized her. His face grew stern as in a low tone he called his uncle's attention to her. Then together they started to the boat-house to meet her. She could not bear their reproaches. Frantically she tore off the trappings of her false position, thinking to jump into the water and drown herself if no other escape offered. Just at that moment a house-boat came down over the course and the current swept the poorly managed craft against the rowing-boat, upsetting it. As it turned the girl sprang to the house-boat and dropped through a window into an empty apartment before any one saw her. She heard a confused shouting, but did not look out to learn the fate of the rowers. Her refuge swept on down the current, and she lay still, endeavoring to quiet the

beating of her heart, that her presence might not be discovered. The boat was empty, going, as she afterward learned, to Wuhu, to bring down some goods. Cautiously she removed some loose boards from the bottom of her room and crept into the dark hold, replacing the boards above her. There she remained for forty hours. For she feared to be discovered by the rough boatmen, and found no opportunity to get away unobserved.

On the second morning she felt the grind of the keel as they reached an anchoring-place, and after a time, when all was quiet, she ventured to look out. The men were all gone save one, who was sleeping in the back end. A forest of boats' masts extended up and down the river-bank. City walls were showing half a li away. Hastily she stepped across two intervening boats and took the path to the gate. Once inside the city she paused to look around. She was faint from hunger and chilled through. She had no idea where she was nor where she should go nor what to do. She went a little farther, and found an entrance to a temple where the sun shone warm on the brick-paved approach, and she sat on a bench and rested. Still the chill remained and her head ached. She had not a cash with her. A priest came by and looked at her. She was restless under his scrutiny, and when he went in she started on. Her head swam when she rose, and she steadied herself by a wall till the dizziness passed. Then she went on. She did not know how far she walked. But finally her limbs refused to move. She was at an open door

where she saw seats within, and she reeled in and sank into one. For a time she could not see nor hear. Her ears seemed full of roaring sounds and queer lights played before her eyes. Then a woman's voice came to her. She did not open her eyes, but listened. She heard again the words which haunted her: "I am the bread of life. He that eateth of this bread shall never hunger." She seemed to hear it as from a distance. Oh, how hot her head was! Then she saw tables and baskets of bread. The loaves seemed to have feet, and would troop past, offering themselves for her eating, but as often as she would put out her hand to take one it would mock her and run away. Hours seemed to pass.

Then the dream changed. Some one with cool, gentle hand stood by her. It was the dress of a foreigner she saw, but the voice of her own home she heard. And it asked who she was and what she wanted. Her tongue seemed held by some evil spirit, and she stared but made no answer. The cool hand felt her brow, the pitying voice said to some one else far away, miles away, it seemed (how big the room must be, she thought): "She is sick. We must get her medicine and care."

Then she dreamed again. She was a princess, and was being carried in a chair. She was put on a velvet couch in a spacious mansion. Delicious food was brought to her, and she ate and ate; then she wanted to sleep.

When she woke she was in a great hospital, and the foreign lady was beside her speaking kindly, and the girl asked, "Are you the bread?"

And the loving face of the other kindled with surprise and the desire to teach, but just then the physician came by on his rounds. After the examination he said:

"I do not understand this fever. She had better be separated from the other patients."

So the removal was made to a small building, standing by itself in a corner of the grounds. And when she was rested, the foreign lady came and sat by her and tried to explain about the Saviour and the life He came to give. Tao Di tried to listen. It sounded sweet and hopeful. She needed some such help, she felt vaguely. But she was too weak to think or listen long. The dreams came again. Boats danced around her, or she was sinking in the water. So it was, day by day. The fever burned until the smallpox developed. Then she was more isolated than ever. In spite of care and skill she failed rapidly. In her delirium the thoughts of the bread remained, mixed with the words of the teacher, and she would murmur:

"Yes, plenty of bread. He is our bread. But no bread for me. Life—life—yes—no—no life bread for me. Too late, too late. I cannot eat it. I cannot take it. Too late, too late."

And so she passed out of her poor dark earthly course. They did not know her. And she received the burial

of a stranger, though pitying eyes were wet with tears of divine sorrow. Light had come to her, but she dallied with darkness, and too late had come glimmerings of desire. The body was past the hour of sane reckoning.

CHAPTER VI.

CHRISTMAS JOY AND SORROW.

CHAO JU had been in the hospital for five years. As attendant, student and assistant he had patiently worked on by the doctor's side and under his direction, until he had acquired a good degree of knowledge and skill. Ordinary cases the doctor frequently left to his care. Most of the patients who came to receive treatments rather preferred to come under his care. They were hardly convinced of the superiority of foreign pills to native plasters, and at any rate one of their own blood could be consulted about various ailments common to their race, which the foreigner did not inherit nor understand, and about which, in his ignorance, he was apt to be incredulous, if not openly scoffing. They were puzzled that he did not examine their seven pulses and wear big goggles with horn rims, and shake his head over their distressing symptoms. But the pleasant light of his big black eyes did not cause them to feel so uncomfortable as the rays that shot out from under the shaggy eyebrows, where the doctor's gray eyes, like live things, took cognizance of everything. Very few of those who once passed in review before those eyes had any doubt of the doctor's ability to heal their troubles, but they disliked the thought of their owner knowing all that was in their heart.

The day before Christmas had been one of unceasing activity. The fall rains had been light and the refuse and filth of the great city had not been swept away by nature's flushing, and the incomplete fall cleaning had been supplemented very little by man, as usual. The succeeding months had been warm, and this unseasonable heat hastened the process of decay in which nature sought to complete the removal and utilization of dead and cumbering matter. From dirty streets and dark, damp alleys; from garbage heaps and refuse at back doors; from compost pits where fertilizers were kept in the garden corners; and from guild-halls where coffined bodies of those from distant places were stored, awaiting the action of friends, came offensive odors telling of foul and sickening gases. To the foreign nose the stenches differed from the normal only in degree. The native organ, accustomed to the richness of its native air, usually needed defense only when a foreigner passed close to windward. But that season even the citizens marked the smells, and the flap of the long sleeves was frequently brought into use as a protection for the olfactory nerves.

A long procession of dispensary patients had received attention, several operations had been performed, the hospital patients looked after. Two urgent calls came in the afternoon from points each some miles distant in opposite directions. One was from a man holding an important position, corresponding nearly to that of mayor in our large cities. His son, a youth of dissolute habits, had run his course with impunity because

protected by his father's name, until he brought disgrace to the home of a family, which had influence to enlist assistance of others powerful enough to dare the mayor's power. As a matter of fact, the mayor did not at all approve of his son's course and would not himself have protected him, but subordinates in his office sympathized with the young man and gave him support. This time, however, they could not save him from his deserts, and he went to his father's apartments and swallowed raw opium, thus revenging himself by bringing odium upon both his father and adversaries. The doctor was summoned in haste to save life.

The other call was from some refugees on a canal-boat lying outside the Dry West Gate. So the doctor went one way, and Chao Ju went to the refugees. His way led along the main street, widened to receive the traffic that trickled or poured in from intersecting roads and alleys, twenty feet from curb to curb. The open fronts of the shops that lined it fringed on the curbs.

He passed through the arched opening in the wall, whose gates stood open in daytime, down the miles of suburban street along the canal till he came to the boat where lay the one to which he had been summoned. The *lao ban,* or boat-master, sat crouched on his haunches, smoking his pipe, and his weather-beaten wife on the other end of the boat was washing some vegetables in the canal. Her neighbor, the mistress of the boat anchored beside theirs, was washing her clothes in the same water, and the children were emptying the boat refuse beside them. The next boat-wife

was dipping up water for the evening cooking, but it was all boiled before it was used.

A crowd of curious children and loafers gathered around the young physician, and some sought to see the occasion of his visit by climbing to the boat, but they were gruffly ordered off by the *lao ban*, who paid no other attention to the matter. Hearing the noise, an old man came stooping through the awkward little opening leading from the inner quarters. He recognized his messenger, and surmising that the stranger was from the doctor whose aid he had asked, went forward as Chao Ju walked up the narrow plank from the bank to the forward deck, and received him with a low bow, his hands clasped in front.

"You are from the great hospital, sir?"

"Yes."

"And your honorable name?"

"Gong is my poor appellation. I have not learned your distinguished name."

"My mean family name is Li."

"And may I ask your given name?"

"Ah, certainly. My unworthy name is Si Huing."

"Elegant! And your exalted age?"

"Alas! My years have been few and unprofitable. Forty-nine New Year days have I seen."

He certainly looked older. But the thin hair and wasted form told more of dissipation and inaction, perhaps, than of years. He wore the scholar's garb and had a bearing of good manners mingled with the hesitating address of an unsuccessful man.

But Chao Ju cut short the preliminaries and asked of the sick one for whom he had been called, and was led inside. On a quilt on the floor lay a younger man, pallid and emaciated. The first glance showed the visitor that he had been called to attend an opium-smoker in his extremity. The life hue was gone from the skin. Yellow and parchment-like, it was stretched tightly over projecting bones. Discolored teeth showed through the parched lips. The wasted hands, with long, slender fingers and oval finger-nails, showed good descent and care of former years. Now they were dirty and nerveless. But the thumb and forefinger of the right hand had the telltale stains which cannot be cleansed, telling of many an opium pill formed and pressed, moulded into shape for the pipe and the flame. The heavy odor pervading the boat told of recent use of the pipe that lay on a little shelf with the silver smoker's case. He was too weak to talk, and Chao Ju directed his questions to the older man.

"What can I do for you?"

"You see, sir, this youth. Can you not do something to bring him back to strength? I have done the little I can. We have had our own healers, but they have not helped him. And now that our money is all used they will come no more, and we hoped the foreign doctor might be so kind as to look at him. Since you come in his stead, doubtless you, sir, can write a prescription to call back his spirits that are leaving."

"My elder brother is mistaken. The foreigner works

not with magic. He helps the sick and suffering, but cannot raise the dying."

"Oh, sir, you have learned their wonderful secrets. I cannot give you much money. But the Master said: 'Yield much, exact little. Dispense bounty and seek not reward.' Help the poor boy."

"You must believe me. I do not want your money. But nothing will help your friend. Why trouble his dying hours with medicine which cannot do good?"

"Ah, sir, if you would listen to me your heart would surely be touched. This lad is my all. You see the pipes here for the great medicine. In my heart I hate it, but for many years I have been addicted to it. My parents left me early. I had neither brother nor sister. A home I had, and one who dwelt within, but I left her to find employment, and never saw her again. After wandering for years I found a dwelling-place in the home of a great family as tutor to this boy. For ten years your younger brother had rest, except for the miserable opium. But having good food I was able to continue its use in moderation and keep at my work regularly. The boy grew up in my heart as my son. He was my pupil, my companion, my joy. Woe unto the day in which, foolishly overcome by his persuasions, I let him learn to smoke my pipe. He, too, came under the control of the terrible appetite. His father's business kept him from home, and he knew not. When the mother learned, her eyes were blinded to his fate, and, though she grieved, she restrained him not. When after a year or so the father understood, he and the boy

quarreled; the boy left home to become a wanderer, and I was cast out. But the reproaches of the parents were not as bitter to me as my own remorse. The pipe became more odious, but I could not break away. With irregular employment, good food was scarce and the opium more necessary. No one would give me rice, but there were those who would debauch me with the black food. But the love of the lad never left me, and when I heard that he was far away from friends, sick and helpless, I took what money I had and borrowed what I could, and went to him. I found him with one consuming hunger for opium, and one desire,—to get home again. So we hired this boat and have been two weeks coming down the long river. Now, nearly home, our money is gone and he is so low. I used our last cash to buy opium. He can take nothing else, and I have restrained my own fierce desire that he might have it all. If he dies thus I can never look upon the face of his father and mother again and my life will go with his. Now, sir, let your grace be extended! Open your heart and help him!"

He would not be denied, and, though Chao Ju insisted he could do nothing, he was finally prevailed on to leave powders which would alleviate the distress, and went away, promising to return the next morning. He reached the hospital before the doctor, who came back late, having by prompt and continued measures succeeded in his errand of mercy. But he would have to go again the next forenoon, and desired Chao Ju to accompany him. So, early on Christmas morning,

he started on his call, to be ready to go with the doctor later.

Snow had fallen in the night. On temple roof, and garden wall and filthy street the white mantle lay like the purity of the new creation. No one was abroad. The steps of Chao Ju's own horse were the first to mar its beauty. The air was calm and peaceful. The trees and bushes, in ermine robes, bowed in the dawning light, as of old the kings of the East worshiped before the cradle of the Light of the World. It was as if the Spirit of peace and righteousness sent from the Son of the Father brooded upon the face of the sinful, weary old world, covering all its defilement and marred places. The drowsy keepers of the city were swinging open the battered gates on creaking hinges as he rode under the arch. From this elevation he looked over the canal and the low-lying streets skirting it to the hills along the mighty river, joining earth and sky and forming gigantic pillars for the bridge of light thrown in horizontal beams by the rising sun, along which his warming power might pulse. He passed the government station for free distribution of rice to the needy. In the open space around it were hundreds of hovels thrown up in a day to shelter homeless wanderers or starving famine refugees from the north. Some were holes in the ground covered with reeds. Most of them were squares of matting, the middle curved up like the covering of prairie schooners, the sides banked with earth. Some lived under upturned boats, and one poor wretch lay in an excavation partly covered by

the rotting remains of the coffin which had been taken therefrom. But even here the pitiful efforts of the shuddering snow to conceal the rags and squalor had resulted in softening and covering, and the quietness almost brought suggestions of peace. Not quite, however. From somewhere sounded the peevish wailing of a sick child, and from under the corner of a mat crept an old graybeard and stood barefoot in the snow, shaking it from his ragged gown, which had evidently been his only cover.

Chao Ju hurried on and found the boat, but no one was visible. In answer to his call the tutor's head appeared at the opening from which he removed the board, and the young physician walked through the unsullied snow and found death and sorrow under the cover.

The spirit of the youth had returned "unto the God who gave it," and the defiled, starved body lay on the floor where the tutor sat beside it, keeping his vigil in darkness, heeding neither the whiteness of the snow nor the brightness of the sun. He was wan and haggard, and, surest proof of heart-pain, the opium-pipe lay untouched where it was when the visit of yesterday was made. As Chao Ju stood silent outside, he arose and his grief gave unstudied dignity to his wasted form. "Sir," he said, "I thank you for coming. The dead is mine. He nor I have any claim on you, nor any in this great city. There is the potter's field for him. I know not what for me. It matters not. I have brought naught but evil to those I loved.

Now all are gone. Nothing remains to me but a maddening desire for the accursed thing, which even now is overcoming my grief, and soon I will have forgotten him and all in its deadening, cursed, blessed oblivion."

He closed with a gesture terribly eloquent with self-loathing and despair, then, throwing his hands wide, he broke into the death-wail. But none of the occupants of his own or adjoining boats stirred or gave evidence of hearing his cry. He was a stranger, and it was no concern of theirs. But the disciple of the Christ whose birth was sung that day was stirred by divine pity. The man could not be stayed from his opium that day. After its duties were finished would be time to think of that. But he must have food. Calling the boatman, he left money for rice and meat and made himself responsible for a day's hire of the boat. Then he bade the living watch by his dead until he sent further word, and returned to the hospital.

The snow was disappearing under the sun. Traffic filled the streets. The crowds of applicants for aid were toiling to the rice station. A few were chatting, and joking even. All carried baskets or pails. If any had respectable clothing it was discarded, for that was an official reception at which rags were full dress. The measure of rice was according to the mouths present. Children flocked along. The big ones carried the little, or dragged them. If the blind and the lame could not hold the walls of ancient Jebus they could storm the citadel here. Old grandparents, too feeble to walk,

came on the backs of sons or daughters. Under the tramping of many feet the purity of the morning disappeared, and the earth reeked with their misery, and its stench went up to heaven as a record of sin and degradation.

The doctor was ready, and they started at once for the mayor's *yamen*, the building in which were the offices. On their arrival they were ushered into the mayor's private apartments without delay, according to his orders. In a few moments the great man appeared, welcoming the doctor by a silent and deeply respectful bow, conducting him at once to the chief seat, on a raised dais, expressing at the same time his thanks for the timely aid for the son and his admiration of the knowledge and skill displayed. The doctor, before sitting down, mentioned his assistant. The mayor turned to Chao Ju with manner entirely changed. This was one of his own people, his inferior, of the mass accustomed to come into his presence with bending of the knee. But since he came as the doctor's assistant, demands must be modified. A few commonplace polite phrases were exchanged and the official formally invited him to a higher seat, but Chao Ju's common-sense held him from presuming, and he merely bowed silently and stood in his place. His bearing pleased the great man, and he kindly bade him be seated, and called for tea and dainties for the three. In a few moments they were conducted to the sick man's room. Here the doctor was in command, and his assistant was next to him. As Wang Da Ren, the

mayor, watched, a growing respect for the young man came. He noticed the dependence placed in him by the doctor, and the deftness and accuracy in handling the patient and the instruments. By the time the treatment was completed he was ready to accord the student a share of admiration he held for the doctor. When they retired he again invited them to sit down, and seemed to desire to hold conversation. He had but recently been appointed to his post, and had spent his previous life in interior points, where he had not come in touch with foreigners.

"But the great man is busy," said the doctor, "and we must not take his time. Many important matters wait for his attention."

"My little affairs can wait. You, too, are a busy man, and cannot come often."

Then followed a half-hour's talk about foreign customs and places. Finally the work of the mission was touched on, and Wang Da Ren expressed his desire to know more about their methods and aims, saying that he would be pleased at a fitting time to be present at some characteristic gathering to see how matters were conducted. "For you know," he said, "we have no such gatherings in our customs. We have no public assemblages, and especially is it strange in our minds for men and women to mingle at such places."

"Wang Da Ren has spoken at an exceeding appropriate time," said the doctor. "This evening we hold one of the most notable gatherings of the year. It

would give us great pleasure to have your Excellency present with us."

"What is the occasion of the assembly?" asked the other.

"It is a festival held to celebrate the advent of Heaven's Lord when He came to earth," said the doctor; and he explained the Christmas season and its meaning.

The official listened with interest, and expressed a warm desire to be present should his engagements permit.

The afternoon was fully occupied in various ways. Once, when Chao Ju went to the chapel to see about some matter of preparation for the evening, he encountered Mey Wing. But she avoided any direct conversation, staying in the girls' corner. But that was a point I could not but see. She always appeared constrained when he was around. He hastened away, and kept busy at the hospital the rest of the day. He sent a messenger to Li, the tutor at the boat, asking him to come to the hospital at seven o'clock for a special reason, and took supper with his uncle and mother in her rooms. This was an unusual pleasure, for all were busy workers, and rarely could get away at the same time.

The chapel would seat comfortably about a hundred and fifty, but that evening not fewer than three hundred were crowded in. The outsiders had heard rumors of some wonderful matter, and came in force. Soldier policemen were there to keep order. The pupils who

were not helping in the exercises were in the gallery with teachers and mothers. A huge tree, resplendent with candles and colored candies, occupied the young men's corner. The other front corner had the organ, with Mey Wing as organist, and the older girls as leaders of the singing. The young men had front seats on the other side, and helped to keep the music up. The ushers were older men, whose gray hairs gave them authority. But it was difficult to control the noisy, crowding, curious mass, and the leaders were in much doubt as to the outcome of the evening.

The opening number was a hymn. As the notes of the organ arose there was a momentary hush of surprise and wonder. But when the hymn was started a babel of exclamations arose from the strangers, who composed half the audience. They rose in their places, and some began to stand on their seats in the endeavor to see.

"Where do the sounds come from?"

"There, there! See that box. It's a girl playing it. Is she a foreign devil?"

"No, just a native one. *Hai!* just see that tall one's hair. What color is it? Gray?"

"No, by all the witches, 'tis red."

"Impossible! My eyes, but she's an old one!"

"What are they crying about?"

"Crying, you fool! Don't you know pigs* squealing when you hear it?"

The hubbub drowned the singing, and just as a

* The Chinese word for Lord is similar in sound to the word for pig, and the people often play on the similarity in punning.

break-down seemed inevitable, a cry sounded from outside, and word was rapidly passed from mouth to mouth that brought a hush over all, as marked as the clamor of a moment before. Then came a scrambling among those in the aisle, a breaking away to left and right, and up the opening marched turbaned men wearing blue cotton coats with flaming axes and tridents. The cry became intelligible—"Clear, clear! Wang Da Ren lai liao—Wang Da Ren is coming!"

The preacher and the doctor hastened to the door to receive the Mayor, and escorted him between the lines of soldiers to the platform, where he sat through the evening. There was no more disturbance, either outside or in the building, and the exercises were carried through without a break. Wang Da Ren was intensely interested in all of what was to him entirely novel, frequently asking questions of the doctor as to the meaning of certain expressions or allusions.

Chao Ju had made his arrangement with the leader, and kept the stranger, Li, by him during the evening. When the exercises were nearly over and the gifts had been scattered, he arose and told briefly the story of the youth whose body lay in the boat; and concluded by saying: "We are glad this night, because we know of the coming of our Saviour. We sing, and give and receive gifts in memory of the wonderful Gift to mankind. This young man died in his sins because he had not heard the gospel, and lies uncoffined and unwept save by this man," taking Li by the arm and causing him to stand before them. "Now, I propose that we

conclude this evening by giving this man money enough to lay his friend away respectably. It will comfort him and please the Lord whose birth we remember."

While the collectors were passing around, Li remained standing near the organ, not knowing what was considered proper in such strange surroundings. Several times during the evening Chao Ju had noticed him staring at Mey Wing, and had supposed it was because of her position as organist. Now, however, instead of showing interest in the money, he was again staring at her with not so much of admiration as of perplexity and wonder in his face. Chao Ju was suddenly struck with wonder also, for, though one face was youthful and fresh in its beauty and the other was aged and worn, there was a puzzling similarity. He could not say just where or how, but certainly it was there. But the old man's stare was becoming annoying to the girl, and Chao Ju drew him to a seat on the other side.

The money was counted and handed over to one of the elders, with instructions that he should see that the matter be properly attended to. While this was being done Wang Da Ren called Li and questioned him closely.

Before dismissing the assembly the preacher asked the mayor if he had anything to say before he went home. It was a new position for the official, but he spoke eagerly.

"This is all strange to me," he said. "My heart is stirred. Your new ways confuse me and my ears are not accustomed to your music. But it is wonderful,

I know not your Jesus, but if He has taught you to love one another and strangers also, so that you give your time and your skill and your money to help them, He surely must be good. You are doing a wonderful work. I shall command my people not to annoy you. Now I want you visitors to remember that you are guests, and go away quietly. My captain here with the guard will remain and see that you do."

And he departed, thanking the doctor and preacher for the pleasure of the evening, while the choir took up the hymn,

"Joy to the world, the Lord is come."

CHAPTER VII.

THE SHADOW OF THE BUDDHIST AND THE BEGGAR KING.

Wu The Lame had an elder brother who did not share his benevolent disposition. He had a tendency to get into quarrels, and cultivated it faithfully. This led him into difficulties with many people, and he seldom stayed many years in any one locality. He became a boatman, carrying passengers and goods in his boat on the Grand canal and on the Yang Dsi river. He knew of the removal of his brother's family to Nanking, and once, some two years after the lame man's death, he hunted them up. He then advised his sister-in-law to get some money by betrothing Mey Wing to some one willing to pay a good sum for her, and to let San Dsi go on the boat with him. Especially did he object to her connection with the foreigners. But his advice was not followed. He disappeared and was not seen again in Nanking until the New Year's festival which followed the occurrences of the past chapter. He seemed more moody than before and his temper less under control.

He found Mrs. Wu in poor health, and learning that Mey Wing was still unengaged he scolded violently about her being led by the customs of the stupid barbarians instead of acting according to the immemorial

habits of her own country. He offered to arrange everything for her, and guaranteed to get a handsome sum out of the procedure, as Mey Wing would attract rich suitors. They could divide the profits and Mrs. Wu could have a rest. But she firmly refused to violate her promise to her husband. She really would not have consented had there been no such cause for refusing, for she, too, had come to detest the thought of selling so rare a flower to some home where she must meet coarseness and degradation. But she used the argument which would best answer him. Her firmness added to his anger, and finally he declared he would act on his right, as her husband's brother, and control their affairs. The first step he would take would be to get a husband for Mey Wing.

"But, brother," she said in conciliatory manner, "you must remember she is not our own child, and we have no legal rights to bind her."

"All the more reason," he retorted, "that we should profit somewhat by her now. A poor beggar brat thrown on your care by strangers and left there by her own kin! We would be fools did we not take advantage of this chance to get something back for the expense and trouble we have had."

She chose to ignore the fact that he had done nothing for her. He did not think it worth while to consider Mey Wing in the matter, but set about at once to discover a suitor with means.

He was not well acquainted in Nanking, but knew where to go for information. He went on the street

and sought for a Buddhist priest. In a few minutes he met one, and accosted him:

"Good day, Lao Ho Shang; can you tell me, if you please, where the Monastery of the Great Assembly is?"

"The road is long, my brother, but 'one cannot enjoy good food yet refrain from the expenses.' If you will follow Broad Market Street till you turn into the Street of the Brazen Bell, then ask for the Phœnix court, you will be near the Great Hall. May your road be prosperous!" And he added, "The fish helps the water and the water helps the fish."

Wu dropped a cash into the extended palm and walked rapidly on. In about an hour he reached the court indicated. It was sixty feet wide and some longer, paved throughout with broken bricks set on edge. One end was open to the street, two sides were enclosed by high walls of business buildings, and at the other end was brick wall, plastered and painted yellow. On the wall were huge representations of ferocious and grotesque spirit guardians of the entrance in black. A large entrance pierced its center. Over this was written, "As he chants about Buddha, Buddha comes to receive him."

On one side was seen "Buddha's eye and Woman's heart;" on the other side, "A golden cord and precious raft." On the large iron-bound double doors which opened inward was the couplet:

"The light of Buddha illumines everywhere.
Mercy clouds overshadow every place."

But Wu did not stop to examine what he could not well understand; he pushed in and inquired of the attendant who came forward:

"May I see your Father Superior?"

"He is not at home."

"I have neglected to ask your honorable name."

"Ah, sir, those who have gone forth from their homes and taken the vows bear no longer the names of their fathers according to the flesh. Your younger brother is known by the name of the Lord, the Ever Blessed One."

"Ah yes! You, sir, have not yet taken the garb of the order. But who is directing the affairs of the hall in the absence of the head?"

"The Most Reverend Bu Tien has charge."

"Will you please say to him that your younger brother has an insignificant matter which he begs to speak in his ears."

The attendant took his card and went away. In a short time he returned and invited the visitor to a smaller apartment, where he was met by a priest with shaven head and face. His long gray robe was full and spotless. Around his neck was a rosary of scented wooden beads, and his hands hanging by his side were covered by his flowing sleeves. As the two men met, a flicker of mutual recognition might have been seen by observant eyes. It was seen in each by the other, but by none else. Their greeting was a silent bow. Then Wu, remembering the presence of others, gave the customary salutation:

"Good morning, reverend father!"

The priest responded by another inclination and offered a seat. Then he called for tea. While this was placed before them the two parleyed in common phrases. But when the attendant retired, at a sign from their superior, Wu said in meaning tones:

"It is well, sometimes, to lose a name."

"Or to change a name," responded the other, glancing at the card before him. "I once heard of a Wu Ping I. I see my elder brother's name is Wu Dsz Hsin. I suppose you could not have known my old friend."

"Your stupid visitor has a poor memory. But he, too, can recall some past events. A certain individual at one time received word of the death of a sister-in-law whose little one was left in the care of strangers. The sacred characters were piously burned at Buddha's shrine lest they should be carelessly trampled under foot and defiled. The sister's share of the family estate passed into the hands of the brother. The little one whose identity was unknown to all others disappeared with its foster-parents. The brother mean time was wanted by the minions of a magistrate, who foolishly listened to other accusations, and he also dropped out of the knowledge of friend or foe. Now a holy disciple of Buddha appears with the face of my former acquaintance, but his name is not Ang. Verily, eyes are not to be trusted as we grow old. But you, sir, are not concerned in such matters. Your unworthy caller has other affairs to speak of."

"Yes. What is it?"

"Strange are the ways in which the cunning spirits lead us! Just as the story of the brother and his dead sister comes to my mind, I am about to speak of that sister's little one, now grown to be a woman."

The priest started, and as no stranger was present he made less effort to conceal his interest.

"Well," he said, "continue your story."

"The four seasons follow in time. The little one has become a woman. My obscure brother with whom she was left has gone. But while my poor head was 'washed by the rain and combed by the wind' she 'walked in the pomegranate gardens.' Her stupid mother put her under the teachings of the western strangers and failed to provide one for whom she may carry water and grind grain. She holds a high head. Boys must be taught while children; the wife as soon as married. It is time she learned how to obey. I come here because you will know where one can find a proper suitor. If I mistake not, a beggarly follower of the foreign pill-maker is looking that way. The sun declines as soon as it reaches the meridian. We must act promptly."

The priest paused a moment before speaking. Then said:

"Why should there be pretense between us? You are all lips and tongue to-day. Your many words are like the 'drumming of frogs and the thunder of mosquitoes!' You mean that my sister-in-law's child, a girl, is living in the school of the foreigners and is not

betrothed; that you propose to secure for her a husband and fill your own wallet at the same time."

"Your skull is not empty. But we must find one whose carriages and horses approach his door. If the matter is successful your shrines will not be neglected."

"I see. But your tea is cold. Allow me to call for some fresh brewing. You cannot stay? Well, then come again to-morrow at this time and we will talk further."

At the appointed time Wu went to the priest, who told him that the desired suitor for Mey Wing had been found. He had made inquiries through a friend of his, a retired military official, Captain Rong, or Rong Lao Yie. The latter had brought a man who seemed to answer the purpose entirely. He was wealthy and willing to pay a good sum to any one who would secure him a handsome young wife. He was willing to overlook the fact of her connection with the foreigner and her unbound feet. All had been explained to him and he was quite pleased. The money was already in the hand of a trusted middleman, ready to be paid over when the legal formalities were complied with. The priest advised haste. "Failure begins," he said, "just when the supreme moment of opportunity is past."

An attendant was sent to bring the two men to meet Wu. When they came, the four men, after the usual ceremonious exchange of courtesies, sat down, and tea was brought in. The customary questions and replies gave them knowledge of each other's name, place of residence, age and occupation, with some other minor

matters. The stranger was Yin Dsi Ching. His replies were satisfactory as far as Wu could know, and Wu exulted in mind in the prospect of handling some of his money. When, however, they came to the exact amount of money he must give and its use, there was some disagreement. Wu wanted more than Yin seemed willing to give.

"Ah," said the latter, "you want one to buy a bird in a dark cage."

"But you," said Wu, "want to eat fish and yet complain of the fishy taste. For so beautiful and accomplished a singing lark as my niece you would not regret twice the amount asked. We are poor and my little one must not go to your mansion in rags or with empty hands. When you lift the veil your soul will be filled with gladness at the wonderful bargain you will have secured. Your house will be full of music and her bright beauty will warm your heart. In buying or selling, one wrangles about trifles. But in the matter of caging a golden pheasant, one cannot count the coppers."

But Yin still demurred, and the completion of the matter seemed uncertain, for Wu's avarice and stubbornness both were aroused, and he was fast losing his temper when the priest drew him aside and spoke privately.

"It is not easy to catch a slippery eel with bare hands," he said. "Can we not think of some bait which will cause him to fasten himself? Is the girl really as beautiful as you say?"

"I have not spoken my words to eat them. She is fair as the moon riding in the clouds."

"Well, all our talk here is as dragging the moon's reflection out of the water. The child must see the moon before he will cry for it. You will not fill your wallet by further talk. You may as well try to resuscitate a fish in a dry net. Can we arrange any way to let him see your niece?"

Wu thought for a moment, then answered: "Yes. They are carefully guarded as usual. But on the worship days she sits in front of their hall and beats the foreigner's music box while they sing. Any one who wishes to do so may remain in the seat given him."

"Good," said the other. And in a short time the matter was arranged, and on the next Sabbath morning Mrs. Wu was surprised to see her brother-in-law conducting three strangers, one of whom was a Buddhist priest, into the chapel. The decorous conduct of the service puzzled them. They had never seen anything like it. Even at theaters, the nearest approach to this which they knew, the audience listened or moved around and talked as it pleased. The singing and organ music were very strange, but they got a good look at Mey Wing. Then the preacher began to speak. He read first. They caught some sentences. "As a man thinketh in his heart so is he." "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of God." "The proud have laid a snare for me. I said unto the Lord, Thou art my God. Grant not, O Lord, the desires of the wicked."

The four men sat still. Wu listened with a scowling face. The priest with imperturbable, unchanging countenance, as near like to the placid image of Buddha as possible. Yin's small, greedy, cunning eyes watched Mey Wing furtively, and although he tried not to show his feelings, the priest knew that they would get their price from him.

Rong showed a different manner. He listened to the preacher's message and seemed to forget all else. Once he spoke aloud, "Yes, that is true," then controlled himself and remained quiet but intent. Mey Wing, unconscious of the fate hanging over her, sat serene as usual, and received food for her soul from the service of God in His own house. And the Spirit brooded over all, working out the mystery of the Kingdom amid sin and simple faith.

After the service the four men went away to a tea-house, not one of the cheap sort where their tea would cost half a cent for each and all the tables were in one large room, but to a more expensive house, in the fashionable row along the canal. They secured a private apartment on the second floor. One side was open to the sun and overlooked the water. This was in harmony with the importance and the sentiment of the matter to be discussed. Their tea cost a cent a bowl. They were practised bargainers, all of them, and avoided the business topic; each one wishing to seem indifferent as to the outcome, while secretly burning to have done with it.

They discoursed on the beauty of the location and

recalled other picturesque and pleasant places which one or the other had visited. Wu told of the sacred mountains, made famous by association with the name of the Master in his native province of Shan Tung, and of the thousands who climbed its bare sides when the Emperor's representatives offered the annual sacrifice. The priest spoke of his pilgrimage to the far west, to where, in the fastnesses of the vast Himalayas, Mount Omi reared its snow-capped head; of its groves and mighty forests, its stone-paved, weary ways, its shrines and holy temples where thousands of tonsured neophytes studied and recited the ancient Vinayas and the Sutras, the law and the discourses of the Buddha of the Western Heaven, the instructor of gods and men seeking to reach into the Long Abiding of the Nirvana; of how the Shramana dwelling there above the clouds and mists seek by suffering and denial to enter into the cloudless heavens. Rong Lao Yie deprecatingly observed that his travels had not led him to so noted spots as those mentioned by his elder brothers, but their surroundings called to mind the beauties of Soochow and its Water Street and its richly furnished canal-boats; and again Hang Chow was recalled. He described the West Lake of the latter with its miniature islands covered with temples and pagodas and summer homes, all mirrored in the limpid depths of its waters; how the rippling of its tiny wavelets formed an ever-changing kaleidoscope of blue sky, and white, gray and red buildings and green trees.

"Certainly, brothers," he said, "above is Heaven, but below are Hang and Soo."

Yin would have added his contribution and alluded to a trip he had taken to the Tauist headquarters, when Wu took advantage of slowness of phrase to interrupt in courteous manner:

"Truly the Three Doctrines are excellent and all flourish under the benign permission of the Son of Heaven, but the heretical teachings of the Western ignoramuses are detestable. Would that my insignificant niece were out from their influence! The poetical words of Rong Lao Yie remind me of another couplet:

> " 'The silver moon swings overhead,
> Pensive and alone I sit.'

"Our distinguished friend Yin will recognize, I am sure, the force of that. When we can perform a meritorious deed and at the same time bring the glancing lilies into the lonely halls of his stately home, surely we should not delay over trifles."

And the bargaining was on. Wine-cups succeeded the tea-bowls before it was finished. The sun sank toward the west. The shadows of the houses lining the canal obscured the outlines in the dark corners. But it was three against one. It was beauty against money, and for once in his sordid life money was outclassed in the vulgar cesspool of Yin's desires. The agreements he finally signed conveyed to Wu and his associates a goodly sum of silver dross and to himself the person of Mey Wing, a beautiful body enshrining a

spirit made in divine likeness. He gloated over the thought of an early consummation of the affair, and Wu promised to deliver the goods within a few weeks, for his hands itched to feel Yin's money.

When they passed out into the main room of the restaurant, they found it crowded with men, sitting at the tables or standing between them, drinking, eating, talking, gesticulating or listening to a speaker who stood on a box at one end of the floor. They caught some of the words spoken around them as they stood to find the cause of the unusual hubbub.

"It is not best to attack magic except with magic," said one. "But there are wise ones within the four seas as well as beyond."

At another table they heard: "The square houses of the foreigners are built like towers. And there are hollow spaces under the floors and the great-uncle of my son's wife very nearly fell in at one time. He felt the floor give under his feet as he was there one day. If he had fallen in who knows what might have happened him or how he would have got out? He was frightened dead, and of course has never gone near them since."

"I have heard," said another, "that they keep their treasures in there."

"More like," said a third, "the bones of some of the many lost children of whom we hear would be found in such places." This was said in a covert tone by one with an evil look, who was himself not above suspicion as a purveyor of human bodies. But the by-

standers chose to forget this for the time, and joined in thought with one who in awestruck voice said, "Who knows?"

"I wonder," said a new speaker, whose face showed an admixture of caution with credulity, "that our Emperor allows them in his realm, when they are so unworthy of his gracious kindness."

"Who knows the Emperor's mind?" retorted a by-stander. "Some of his officers may be willing to accept of a golden salve for this sore, and the Son of Heaven is far away in his palace."

Then the general talk ceased for a time as the man on the box began to speak in a high-pitched voice. Most of those who listened sipped their tea or ate salted melon seeds while he spoke.

"This is not the first time," said he, "that these western despisers of ancestors have been known in the East. Many cycles ago, the books tell us, our little neighbors of the Islands of the Eastern sea suffered from a like incursion. Many of their people were led off into heretical practices. You know they also learn from our sacred characters and are instructed by visitors from the Flowery Kingdom. Not only did poison enter their minds and lure away their hearts, but children disappeared, women forsook their homes, and sick people whom these strangers visited in the guise of benevolence lost their eyes in mysterious ways. Finally the lord of those islands issued his orders; the loyal ones obeyed and the wicked strangers with their wretched followers were put to the sword or cast from

the rocky shores into the sea and the islands were free from their pollutions. In our own great kingdom also the records are written of how the emissaries from the Roman Church came to the shores of the Middle Kingdom and for a time flourished like the lotus buds. But the fortunate dragon turned his back on them, water and earth became unfavorable to them, and like flying stars they disappeared from among the children of Han."

The speaker suddenly ceased, for one had entered the tea-house whom all recognized as an emissary of the magistrate, and the allusions to which they had been listening were not approved of at that time by the city officials, whose aim was to put down any seditious movement.

Wu and his friends sat down for a time at a table, that they might not draw attention to themselves by retiring just at this point, and Rong Lao Yie spoke in a low voice of rumors he had heard of troubles at some points up the river. The people were in conflict with the rulers, or the foreigners were rebelling against the Emperor and were poisoning all the water in those parts. He could not just sift the rice from the trash, but word had come that some foreigners had been killed by the soldiers, their houses burned and immense quantities of treasure and of dead men's bones discovered among the ruins. These rumors were exciting the people of Nanking, and the magistrates were increasing their vigilance in measures to repress any outbreak.

Wu soon left, and went at once to his sister-in-law, who was preparing for the evening service.

"Sister, let me have a little time to consult with you about our house. See, the eyebrow moon hangs over the west gate. Many such have come and waned again since my brother entered the long night. Still no steps have been taken to build up the fortunes of our family. But when the winter's ice disappears the lotus shoots forth again. It is time that Mey Wing can make dutiful return for what we have done for her. I have to-day met one who loses his sleep and forgets his food because he has caught a glimpse of her fairy face. He is not a bare stick, but has his halls and his bearers. He desires to worship before the goose with your daughter. Let the beautiful bird find her cage. A lucky star directs its influences toward us. You have eaten the acid and received the bitter. Now you may have the three blessings."*

"Your words are pleasant, brother, and I would be happy to see Mey Wing in her own home soon, for I am no longer strong. But who is the one to whom you refer, and will he meet her approval?"

"She *must* give her consent to so favorable a proposal. It is already east completed and west accomplished. The red papers have been exchanged and it is for us to bring about that filial compliance with the wise purposes of elders which is becoming in a daughter of Han."

"Great brother, you know I have pledged my word

* Riches, longevity, and posterity.

that she shall not be forced into what she does not herself desire, and I cannot consent to this arrangement until she has been consulted and has had an opportunity to know of the one of whom you speak."

Wu's anger was near the breaking-out point, but he controlled it, and expostulated for a time. The mother, however, could not be moved from her purpose, and finally the explosion came on. He raged and cursed, and finally declared that the contract would be fulfilled without her consent and without consulting Mey Wing at the time agreed on. In his fuming he also let fall something of the talk he had heard about the foreigners in the afternoon, and made indefinite threats about what would happen to the foreigners in the coming days. He left Mrs. Wu greatly disturbed, and she sent at once for San Dsi. He had gone out, and she waited anxiously for his return. After half an hour he came, and she questioned him as to any rumors he had heard of risings against the foreigners. He had heard very little, but that little was of a disquieting nature; rumors of troubles at up-the-river points; mutterings of discontent; whisperings of suspicions, nothing definite. But when she asked if he knew aught of a man named Yin Dsi Ching, he answered promptly:

"Yes, my mother, I have just returned from his house. Our uncle called me to take him there when he came out from his talk with you. Why do you ask?"

"Your uncle has made an agreement to betroth Mey Wing to him without my consent. Who is he?"

"He is the last man in this city to whom I would wish to see her given," responded the young man. "He is the King of the Beggars. He formerly was a beggar himself. No one knows his origin. He is said to have begged on the streets here years ago. Then he gradually rose through the various grades of the Beggars' fraternity until he now is called their king and settles all disputes among them, assigns them their stations and beats, and is the official representative of the guild before the magistrates. He enjoys a good income. No one who does not pay his monthly dues to him can have a begging station in this city. But he is a cold, sordid, conscienceless man, greedy for money only, and is despised by all decent people who know him. Mey Wing had better die than become the slave of such a man."

"Do you think, my son, that your uncle knows all this?"

"He cannot help but know it if he has made any inquiries at all. Yin is well known over the city. But he will pay well for her, I assure you, if uncle can deliver her to him."

"But, San Dsi, can we not save her from him?"

"I fear not. As my father's elder brother he has legal right to control such matters. Can we not get help from the doctor?"

"What can he do? He may not break up our old customs nor change laws. No, my son, our help must come from God whom we have found here. Go and call your sister."

When the girl appeared, Mrs. Wu did not think best to conceal the matter from her, but told her all, in tears and with loving sympathy. Mey Wing's face flushed and whitened by turns as she listened. When the whole truth was before her, she turned to her mother in terror, crying:

"Is there no escape? Will God allow this?"

And the mother with sorrowful heart gathered her little flock together and knelt with them, crying to the God of the widows and fatherless:

"O Father," she prayed, "the proud and the evil-doer would destroy us. He has made the laws and established the customs, and there is no one to whom we can turn for deliverance but unto Thee. O God, Thy humble servants have trusted in Thee and Thou hast proved Thyself faithful in times past. Thou hast taken away our head to be with the saints on high. Thou art our refuge and our hope. Look upon us this night and work salvation from sinful man who would take this child of Thine for wicked purposes. Take us from the hand of the greedy and selfish man who would sell our peace for gain. O Lord, we wait on Thee, for none other can help. Let us not be ashamed before our enemies. And we will praise Thee and serve Thee through eternity. We ask in Jesus' name. Amen."

Then comfort from God filled their hearts and fear was taken away.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE RIOT AND THE RESCUE.

During the week following, rumors and whisperings and mutterings of discontent increased day by day. Tales of risings and riots, of burnings and booty, of danger, and even of death, came floating down the river or rolling from tea-house to tea-house along the roads toward the coast, gathering indefiniteness and volume on the way. The magistrates posted proclamations in prose and in rhyme, warning citizens against circulating seditious reports and against congregating in crowds to discuss the exciting news. But this added fuel to the excitement and increased the eagerness to hear what was forbidden. The word passed from mouth to ear and returned again after traversing a circle, so changed in form that the ones who first told it did not recognize it as their own, but supposed it must be a second horror, and sent it to chase after the first in an endless round.

Hankow was in flames, the rumor said. The people had risen in virtuous wrath and sought out the miscreants who were seizing little children. Wails of a child in distress had been heard coming from one of the mission houses, and when the gentry demanded admission, that they might investigate, the insolent foreigners refused to permit it. Then when the gates

were about to be forced by the impatient crowd, those on the inside set fire to the house, and escaped, borne over the city walls on the clouds of smoke. But the flames spread to surrounding houses and caused much suffering. Under the ruins of the house were found charred bones of sixteen children. The little toes and fingers of each child were missing. They had certainly been collected and sent off in some of those boxes which the foreigners sent to their own country containing curios, because they were jointed, whereas the foreigners' toes were stiff.

Wuchang also was in a ferment. But the perfidious teachers of the Jesus cult at that point had taken refuge in the magistrate's *yamen*, and he protected them because they gave him ten thousand ounces of silver.

But it was from Wushieh that the most exciting tales came. A miserable beggar was dying there some days before. Of course no one wanted the spirit to haunt his house, so he was placed in the center of the widest street, that the spirit might easily get away when it left the body. But one of those wretched foreigners saw him and had him carried to his own place, pretending benevolence. A few days later the body was hastily carried out in a coffin and buried deep in the ground. No one had an opportunity to see it. Why this secrecy, except that his eyes and his heart had been removed to be used in enchantments? This explained beyond doubt why other graves had been broken into of late. The wrath of the Emperor's

faithful subjects could not be controlled. They assembled by thousands and broke the foreigner's gates down. He tried to escape the punishment for his shameless ways, but was caught, as he climbed over a wall, with a boat-hook, and pulled down where, with spears, and tridents, and stones, and clubs, power to do further mischief was taken from him, and the body was left in the street as carrion. And from other places came similar reports. Rumors of sinister events in the far north were whispered around. Li Hung Chang, the faithless earl, who had received so much of the foreigners' gold, had put countless treasure on one of his own steamers and fled to France for refuge. An English gunboat, steaming up the Yang Dsi river to assist the imperiled ones, had been sunk by the guns of Wusung fort, and the remainder of the British fleet was in terror fleeing from Chinese waters. A French force had advanced from Tongking, but the leader of the dauntless "Black Flags" had met them from Canton and driven them in confusion across the border. And the question came to be in many minds, though hardly any dared to breathe it, "Why are the foreigners permitted to walk among us as if these events were not taking place at all?"

If the missionaries heard any of these whispers or received reports from outside they kept their own counsel and said nothing about them. They went about their work in the usual way. This tended to restrain outbreaks. On Thursday one of them went to a suburban point to visit a small school. Not far

away was a large depot for free distribution of rice to the poor. The teacher of the school told the visitor privately that many ugly reports were being circulated, and that in order to precipitate trouble some evil-disposed ones had caused the word to go around that the foreigner was afraid, and in order to placate the people, had arranged to give a hundred *cash* to every one who would go to the school for it that day. The crowd had just then gone for rice, but in a short time the hundreds would be pouring back, and if the foreigner was seen in the schoolhouse there would surely be a riot. The visitor left at once, and started to make a wide detour in the country to avoid the throng. But he was seen and followed by a few who called loudly for the *cash*. Soon hundreds followed, until the way was blocked before and behind. No progress could be made. No escape from their importunity seemed possible. Gray-haired men, and women tottering with canes, and little toddling children; refugees from famine regions, professional beggars, the unemployed and ne'er-do-wells; hungry, homeless, starved ones, needing the *cash* and believing the report; leering, mocking evil ones who wanted only to crowd and torment the foreign devil: all pushed and shoved, demanding with outstretched hand the promised *cash*. Some kneeled in front, begging. Some from behind pulled at his clothes and knocked off his hat. An old toothless hag at the side seized his hand in her eagerness that he should not overlook her. From somewhere clods and small stones were thrown, pelting his

face. There was no wall near, against which he might stand and face them. He tried to form some plan of action, but looked up and saw nothing but the blue sky; around him was the multitude in faded blue cotton; and he thought grimly the whole outlook was rather bad. He did not feel afraid. He always realized that patience and gentleness were the means the Father would bless in dealing with such a crowd. But he was perplexed. The crowd was not dangerous yet, but it was like tinder; some untoward accident or rash action might at any moment cause trouble. And many in the crowd desired that end. A sudden commotion caused a momentary apprehension. Those in front of him, walking backward, fell over some obstacle by the roadside. It proved to be a coffin covered with matting half sunk in the ground. He recognized this as the vantage-point he had been looking for. Mounting it at once he shook off the hands clinging to him, and held up his own in signal for silence. The clamor kept up for a time. More pebbles struck him, and some from the rear, thinking that the distribution was beginning, crowded desperately nearer. But gradually, as he remained motionless and all saw that he was not going away, the noise subsided. He had closed his eyes in prayer for guidance. The word was whispered that he was using incantation, and a few of the superstitious shrunk back from his side. But for a moment he saw them not. He saw a swarthy multitude in a desert place and heard them clamoring for bread, citing Moses and manna as precedents. He saw One

standing in the midst, not dark-browed like those around Him, but with somewhat of the fairness of heaven in His eyes. The look of sorrow and disappointment caused by their misunderstanding of Him was passing, and in its place came great pity and divine compassion. But the silence recalled him to the present. He opened his eyes and saw the hundreds of faces turned toward his. Avarice, hunger, ignorance, curiosity, superstition, cunning, dislike, fear, recklessness, all were written on those living pages. If there was sympathy in the minds of any it must have been in those on the outskirts, whose faces could not be seen. But he knew that his times were in the keeping of the Father, and was blessedly filled with compassion for those who were as sheep having no shepherd. Yearning to help them, he stretched his hands toward them. Some shrank as to escape his grasp. Others put out their hands to receive gifts. But he spoke in low tones at first in the intensity of feeling, then more loudly that all might hear. And those who never heard the message of the Christ elsewhere heard it there as he stood over the dead body, surrounded by the dead in spirit. There was no rising in new life from the coffin. Whether or no new hearts were granted to any that afternoon he never knew, but for half an hour they all listened. He told them of the lame man at the Gate Beautiful, and the gift of God to him.

"O my friends," he cried, "I, too, like Peter and John, have neither silver nor gold to give you, but I

bring you that which is far more costly, far more satisfying."

Then they looked to see him bring out some rare gems, and began to crowd up.

"No," said he, "stand still and I will tell you of it." And he told them of how Jesus fed the five thousand with bread and fishes, and how, when that satisfied them not, He gave Himself, opening the gates of heaven before their gaze. The leering, mocking ones saw that their power for bad had passed.

"Oh, come on, he's preaching! Why stand gaping and listen to his crazy words?"

And they crowded out.

Some followed. Some, loth to give up the hope of money, remained. Others, held by the story and the love in the man's tones and face, were drawn as to a magnet. The winnowing fan of the Spirit separated them until, as the sun was getting low in the west, he bade them good day, and stepping down he walked quietly through their midst. An old woman, lame and nearly blind, ragged and starved, touched him as he passed, still asking alms.

"Yes, great mother," he said gently, "what I have you shall take. Have a good supper and may God's dear Son grant you His peace."

To others who started forward he said, "No, I have nothing more now. Peace be with you," and went on homeward.

Meantime through the city the rumors spread and the mutterings grew louder. Excitement flared when it

was reported that a foreigner had been mobbed in the suburb. Wu and his associate conspirators met one day to talk over the prospects of getting possession of Mey Wing. The growing feeling against the strangers suited them exactly.

"If this matter comes to a head," said they, "she will not hide behind their accursed walls much longer." And Wu among the boatmen, the priest among devout Buddhists, Yin among the beggar guild, they swelled the volume of insinuations and suggestions.

Mrs. Wu had broken down under the excitement and worry, and had been persuaded to rest and have treatment in the hospital. There she was free from the persecutions of her brother-in-law, but she was fearful each time that Mey Wing walked the square from school to hospital, lest she should be carried away by some ruse. Thus the week passed and another Sabbath came.

The great city did not know God's purpose of rest for its myriads. But the Christians gathered as usual for worship and instruction. No disturbances occurred in the churches, but the street chapels were not opened in the afternoon, because of the uneasy crowds on the main avenues. The missionaries, representing four denominations, all gathered from their various work in the afternoon for prayer and consultation. Not in word or feature was any fear shown. Earnestness there was, and some discussion as to the proper course to follow. While they were together came a communication from the Consul General at Shanghai, advising

a withdrawal to the seacoast until the wave of disturbances should have passed over the section. None liked to act on the suggestion. But it was a grave matter to disregard such communications. In such case, if trouble should occur, lives be lost or property destroyed, they would be blamed for foolhardiness, and the assistance of the home government's representatives in obtaining redress would be difficult to obtain. Besides, it seemed possible that their presence in the city was an irritant, and it might be wise to go away quietly for a few days or weeks. But some had better stay to look after matters of emergency. After a generous rivalry as to who should remain, it was decided that three men should stay and the others with all the women and children should go on the following day.

That evening all of the pupils who had homes near by to which they could be sent were quietly scattered. Consultations with native helpers, packing of boxes and other arrangements occupied most of the night. In the early morning, with as little demonstration as possible, they repaired by various roads to the steamer wharves on the river-side and embarked for Shanghai. Mey Wing went to stay by her mother in the hospital until further plans would become necessary.

But watchful eyes had noted the movements, and, like fire in dry prairie-grass, the news spread all over the city that the Westerners had gone, carrying with them, it was added, all their curios and treasure. Some said that they had been so frightened that they left

much of value behind and the houses were unprotected. Then the excitement broke forth and the bounds of law and order were forgotten in the rush. Mobs assembled at each separate missionary compound, intent on curious inspection and loot. But the presence of the three men, who took care to let themselves be seen, plainly disconcerted them. They did not know how many more there might be. But at Beh Men Chiao there was work for women and girls only, in charge of single ladies, and all were gone. There the first breach was made. Walls were scaled and gates burst. Doors were forced and buildings ransacked, and finally attempts were made to burn them, but these events occupied some hours. Meanwhile, messengers hastened to the city officials, and after some delay the head of police with a force arrived and scattered the fire-builders and firebrands before much serious damage had been done.

More serious trouble was brewing around the hospital, a mile and a half away. Wu was one of the first to know the movement of the missionaries, and early in the morning he sought his confederates.

"Now is the time for us to strike," he said. "We must move quickly, before the magistrates bestir themselves and bring a force to protect these pest-houses. Reverend father, you must know many who are ready to assist in tearing down these standing insults to the holy faith. Your followers, Mr. Yin, would surely find rare pickings amid such ruins, more than they often have. I, myself, though of no influence, yet

know of strong-armed boatmen who have suffered these years because of the greedy sweeping of profits which should have been theirs into the bottomless maw of the foreigners' steamers. Boat-hooks make good weapons. For ourselves, our game is in hiding there. My haughty niece will soon be preparing our friend's meals and he will warm himself in her beauty's rays."

Cupidity, passion and revenge are strong motives to arouse evil men to action, and in half an hour from that time their crowds began to appear before the hospital. Stories of men who had gone in there and never had come out again; of arms and legs taken to feed the dogs; of eyes and hearts compounded into wizard pills; of secret rooms and stored-up bones, passed from group to group and became constantly more gruesome.

Yin, in beggar clothes, was among them, and started his minions to tell of a child that had been carried in there that very morning under the influence of the foreign opiates and was at that moment in danger of being sacrificed to the foreigners' demon. A beggar-woman was started through the throng, weeping aloud and appealing to them to save her boy from the fearful fate.

Those not in the plot grew frenzied, and the others simulated it. Some sought to scale the walls; others battled at the gates. Cries came from all sides.

"Where is the child? Let us get at this eater of men! Drive out the haters of our holy religion! Shoot

the followers of the pig! Kill! Burn out the foxes! Tear down the vermin nest! Kill! Kill! Burn! Kill!"

Stones were thrown over the walls into the compound, and some crashed through the windows. Inside, quiet and order prevailed. The doctor gathered his helpers and such patients as could walk into the chapel, and for ten minutes earnest prayers ascended to the God whose work was assailed. Then all the women and children were sent upstairs and the doctor prepared to send a messenger to the mayor for assistance. But how could he get the word there? Any one going out of the gate would surely be intercepted. San Dsi was inside, and to him the doctor intrusted the note, saying that he would open the gates and parley with the crowd, and perhaps in the confusion the boy could get away unobserved.

The noise outside was increasing and the numbers growing. Plans were made for storming the gates. A party was advancing with axes, when suddenly the gates were opened from within and the doctor stepped out into view. A shout and then a silence ensued. Most of them knew him. Many of them had been treated by him. Scarcely one of them but had heard of his power and skill.

"Friends," he said, "why are you gathered here?"

No one answered until he singled out a man of some local prominence, standing not far away.

"My elder brother, Ren, will perhaps tell me what causes this disturbance," he said.

Meanwhile San Dsi was quietly working his way through the mass.

The man accosted shifted uneasily, but made no answer until the doctor spoke again. Then he answered cautiously, "I know not; I just now happened along."

San Dsi had reached his donkey and was speeding toward the mayor's office.

"But my friend can tell me, perhaps, what these men were saying and what caused them to throw stones which endanger sick men."

The man knew that having been recognized there was danger of his being called to account in the future, and decided that his best course was in assuming frank friendliness. And he repeated some of the things he had heard.

All within hearing were listening intently. The doctor thought a moment, then said:

"A headless snake makes no headway. Who will undertake to stand for this crowd that I may talk to a purpose?" After some whispered consultation four men were put forward. They were rough strangers. They were not the real leaders, but were put out as blinds. But the doctor's point was to gain time, so he seemed to take them in good faith.

"Friends, will you tell me what you wish? If you beat a dog you insult his master. You are destroying my walls and breaking windows and frightening children. I come to ask you what is your purpose."

The men were nonplussed. Their purpose was loot

and destruction, but they could not tell him that. Their minds were filled with the evil stories of the week, but as they stood before his honest, straightforward eyes they could not feel the truth of the calumnies as they had in the tea-houses and opium-dens. They pursued the usual tactics of their class and fenced for advantage, ignoring truth.

"You see, sir, there are many ignorant and rough fellows here who have heard evil reports of your great hospital, and they are excited. No one can control them. If we attempt it they would probably beat us. We would advise you to let us take you away quietly, so that you will not be injured. We have heard of your good deeds and would be sorry to see you suffer, but no one can say what will happen here."

While they spoke the doctor noticed that they tried to stand so as to hide from him others who were slipping in to cut him off from the gate. He stepped quietly over and placed his back against it, then answered:

"Many of these people are like the fishermen who, having caught the fish, forget the net. They have been fed and healed here, but now seek to destroy the place. Can you not speak to them and advise them to remember what has passed, and go on that we may continue our good work?"

Their only answer was, "Would you read a poem before an ox?"

"But," said the doctor, "if one kills another he must forfeit his own life. A bad deed travels a thousand miles. Would it not be better to be sure that what

they say has some foundation before they go any farther? Select five men to go with me and I will take them to every part of the hospital and they can see whether or not these evil things are true."

Mey Wing and others, emboldened by the quiet, had ventured to approach the windows overlooking the gate and look out. Wu and Yin both saw and recognized her. They were impatient to get inside and reach her, and so when the four representatives came back to consult over the doctor's proposal, they urged its acceptance.

It would get him out of the way and open the path for an assault on the gates from which his presence deterred the more timid in the mob. So another boat hand was added to the four, and the doctor led them in to examine the premises.

As his purpose was to hold the crowd in check until help should arrive, he proceeded slowly and showed them everything, charging Chao Ju, however, to watch the crowd. The delay was exasperating to the conspirators, and they urged, as far as they dared without seeming to take the lead, that the gates should be forced at once. Chao Ju noticed the stir with growing uneasiness. As a last precaution he remembered the box containing a manikin and pictures of studies in anatomy and a few bones which the doctor used in the class work with the medical students. He took it up to a little room near the head of the stairs, intending to lock the room securely, but found the key was gone. He returned to ask the doctor for it. As he passed an

upstairs window he saw San Dsi urging his donkey on his return, accompanied by a man whom he did not recognize in the distance. He found the doctor and his posse at one end of the lower floor. As he received the key a sudden roar startled them all, and a trampling of hundreds of feet, the clamor of many excited voices told that the great gates had been crushed and the mob was flooding the central doors. At the same time San Dsi and the stranger, whom they now recognized as Li, the traveler found on the house-boat at Christmas-time, came in by a private entrance. There was no stemming the tide on the first floor, but a glance showed that some were headed directly up the broad stairway for the second floor. That must be protected. Chao Ju hastily called San Dsi, and the stranger followed. They sprang up a back way. As they reached the head of the stairs they saw four or five men run into the women's wards, but there was no time to follow them. They met the rush, and with voice and hands and feet stemmed it. The stairs were jammed with a solid mass of men who could not go back because of the pressure from below. A powerful riverman shoved on up, shouting maledictions on the renegades who dared to stand for the hated foreigners. With his boat-hook he slashed up and caught Chao Ju on the face, causing blood to flow freely, and attempted to push on past. But Chao Ju's big frame and athletic training were not for nothing. The excitement of the day, righteous indignation over the lawless invasion, and wrath over the blow gave impetus

to muscle. He struck out sharply, and caught the unguarded ruffian on the temple; then, before he rallied from the shock, the young man lifted him bodily and tossed him over the heads of those on the stairs clear to the shoulders of the struggling mass below. In the midst of the mêlée, suddenly from outside came the sharp cry: "Kai, Kai; Wang Da Ren is coming. Room! Room!" And down the road at double-quick came the bearers carrying the mayor in robes of office, preceded by one company of soldiers and followed by another. At the same instant a girl's cry was heard from the room adjoining, and Wu and Yin came out running and dragging between them Mey Wing, fainting in fear. Chao Ju's wrath flamed afresh and he sprang towards them, but San Dsi in fierce bounds reached them first, crying, "Even a tiger eats not its own young." And he grappled with Yin while Chao Ju seized Wu. Li caught the fainting girl as she fell from their grasp, and laid her on a bamboo couch in the hall, where her mother who followed administered restoratives. And again, as at the Christmas festival, Li stood and gazed on her fair face, oblivious to all else around him.

Like leaves before the whirlwind the mob disappeared before the rush of the rescuers, except those who were captured as ringleaders. Among these were Wu and Yin, who were turned over with explanations of their doings, and carried by the soldiers to the city jail.

That ended the riots. In a few days the exiles began

to return. After two or three weeks the work was proceeding as usual. From all the Christians went up fervent thanks for deliverance. But for double cause and with double gratitude did Mey Wing and her mother sing:

"Blessed be the Lord who hath not given us as a prey to their teeth. Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowler; the snare is broken and we are escaped. Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth."

CHAPTER IX.

LI SI HUING INTERCEDES.

When Li Si Huing, whose pupil and companion died on the house-boat on Christmas morning, had laid away the body, he had no home nor friends to whom he cared to turn. Relatives there were in the far-off north, and, if he had chosen to claim it, an interest in clan property was his. But long since he had ceased to feel an interest in either. His had been the part of the prodigal son in the far country, and bitter had he found the husks with which he had tried to stay his soul. There could be no welcome for him in the home of the boy whom he had in folly taught the use of the deadly drug, and whom all his love and bitter remorse could not win back to purity and life. Opium alone did not kill the youth, but it destroyed the moral nature and left him no will nor inclination to fight other habits of dissipation which hastened the end. The man's grief was sincere and his loneliness was bitter. He could not easily leave the vicinity of the grave of the only one who for many years had manifested any affection for him. He found a certain comfort in the sympathy of Chao Ju and others of the Christians who found opportunity to show him kindness. In addition to these, one other cause held him. In Mey Wing was an unexplainable but powerful at-

traction. When first he saw her on that memorable Christmas evening, he was spellbound with wonder as he saw in her face and bearing what irresistibly took him, unresisting, back to the brief year he had spent in his one earthly Eden. He had been a brilliant student; and after he had taken his first degree in the government examinations, his parents had showed their pride by spending more than they could afford in giving him an expensive reception and outfit when he married the girl they had chosen for him. He had not known her, and regarded her coming merely as an incident in the establishment which gave him a standing in his world. But that feeling passed in a few weeks. He came to love his beautiful, high-spirited wife as few men in the old empire love women. The serpent in their home was opium, to which he was a slave even then. When at the end of a year he left her to seek employ, it was in an unsuccessful quest largely because of the curse of opium hanging over him. His wife, too proud to remain a pensioner on his parents, followed him after a time, he heard, but never found him. His pride and lack of success kept him away for a year. Then his love forced him back, against pride, and she was gone. His brother told him that he had heard she died, a pensioner on strangers.

Broken-hearted, crushed, he became a wanderer, a cumberer of the earth. Now this girl, the daughter of obscure parents in the south, carried him to his past in one of those mysterious grasps which prove the continuous identity of the self. Habits, ambitions, fea-

tures,—yes, the very atoms of his physical body had changed; but as feature, carriage and charm of his young wife were recalled by this stranger, the spirit responded with the same old thrill; the heart that had no memory, responded to the spirit's excitement by pumping hot currents of blood through the stiff old arteries till his head swam and the image on the eye's retina blurred, but still memory recalled the old image. The fierce pain of loss, which he had not felt for many years, gnawed at the spirit till the flesh shrank from the savage burning.

No one told him that she was not what she seemed to be, but her presence completed the chain that held him to Nanking. Under Chao Ju's advice, and constrained by the experiences through which he had passed, he went into the hospital to take treatment in breaking the opium habit. The conditions under which they had come together gave Chao Ju an especial interest in the man, and he bore the expense of food and a private room during the time. Medical treatment and medicines were furnished free to such men. Li was forbidden to leave the room, except with the doctor's permission. Opium was gradually withdrawn and tonics given to sustain the system, weakened by its terrible ravages. As the days passed the poor stomach craved the drug, and loathed food. Every cord and nerve pulled and pushed till he was sure his distracted head would either split or crush in. The whole body became one insatiable desire, and the blood seemed ready to burn itself out of the emaciated casings. The

crazed man could not be held responsible when he crept out one evening and pawned his pipe in a low opium den for a smoke. Some one told Chao Ju, and he got the man back before the craving came on again, and persuaded him to let himself be locked in while the battle was on. Nothing else would have availed, for when the fierce desire came on the man raved and holloed. He cursed and begged in turn. He piteously prayed that they would give him just one smoke to keep him from dying, and then tried to kill himself by choking himself with his own fingers. But after a time the appetite burned out, and after a longer time the system accommodated itself to food, and strength began to come.

When he realized that he was a free man, as he had not been since youth, he was extremely grateful to Chao Ju and all who had rendered assistance. During the weeks of convalescence he studied much in Christian books and attended many Christian services. He came to have considerable knowledge of salient points in doctrine, and regarded it all as admirable. He even assented to the truth of it as far as he could see. But he looked on it as one on the outside. Imbued as he was with Confucian philosophy and ethics, he regarded the spiritual life as one apart from the interests of the intellectual man. It was right and wise to be moral, for no one could attain the ideal of the "princely man" who was debased by low passions. It was right to be respectful toward the gods or spirits, for in understanding such matters did man show himself higher than the

beasts, and certainly the world is nourished by higher powers. It was right to remember with reverence the ancestors, for through them has knowledge and experience been obtained and our own being transmitted. But since it is impossible for one in this physical form to fully understand the mysteries of the spiritual existence, the wise man meddled not with such matters, but gave his energies to the understanding of the ancients and the problems of the present day. So, while gravely courteous toward Christians, and appreciative of the ethical beauties of their system, he sought no personal experience, no part for himself in their Saviour.

As his nerves became quiet and muscles strong, his old skill in penmanship returned, and he proved himself anew the scholar who, as a youth, had given brilliant promise. He was employed to teach a small school where some native books, some Christian books, and primary arithmetic and geography were taught. For a year or so his school was very popular. Then hints and rumors of dissatisfaction began to reach the missionary superintendent. After a time complaints were more pronounced. One day the old man who kept the gate and grounds of the academy went to visit his home in the vicinity of Mr. Li's school. When he returned it was evident that his mind was burdened. He was a peculiar old man, but honest clear through, and the superintendent often talked with him about things outside, because he would not hide facts. The neighbors had complained to him of Mr. Li. They said he

was getting quarrelsome at times, and would drink liquor, and the gateman feared he would take opium also. This was the beginning of perplexity and trouble lasting several months. The teaching was well done. The weekly examinations showed lessons well learned. But it was evident that his old habits were returning. The liquor-drinking was not hidden, and signs of opium were seen in his face and manner, though the practice was concealed. The quarrelsome periods became more frequent. Remonstrance produced no change. For Li's own sake and because of the good work he could do in the school the superintendent was reluctant to dismiss him. Many prayers were offered for him. But the complaints grew more frequent and serious. Some scholars were withdrawn. Finally it seemed that he must be dismissed, and with a heavy heart the superintendent decided to go out on a certain day and close the school. He intended to go early in the morning, but was detained by some callers. While they were in the study Mr. Li was shown in. He looked excited and the superintendent wondered if he were under the influence of liquor or had some intimation of his dismissal. After the other callers had gone out he returned to Li, who at once drew his chair up to the table beside him. No smell of liquor was on him, but his face was working under nervous excitement and his hands were trembling as he said:

"I received the message, teacher, and have come."

"What message, Mr. Li?" The superintendent spoke coldly and was on guard. Who had been carry-

ing warnings to this man? Li's excitement increased and his muscles twitched.

"The message that came last night, you know, teacher."

"I know nothing of any message last night, Mr. Li; I sent none."

"But the Heavenly Father, you know, teacher; the message He gave last night." Li spoke in an awed tone. The other was puzzled. This was so different from the usual quiet, rather reserved manner of the visitor.

"Mr. Li, I do not understand you at all. You will have to explain your meaning."

"Did not the Heavenly Father give you word last night about me?"

"No, not that I understood." Had this man had a vision, or a drunken dream, or was he pretending? "Tell me about it, Mr. Li."

Li was troubled. He drew his chair closer, and said:

"Yesterday I drank wine, and in the afternoon quarreled with the neighbors. In the evening I went out and smoked opium, and do not remember how I got back to my room."

The superintendent was more mystified. Li spoke with such simple, direct honesty of these things. Knowing well the disapproval of them by his hearer, he had always before avoided speaking of them and answered evasively when questioned. With increased interest the story was listened to, as Li went on:

"In the night the Heavenly Father spoke to me. I

could not open my eyes for the light. But I listened, and heard Him call me. And I said, 'Here.' He said, 'You are a sinner.' I answered, 'Yes, Lord,' and He said, 'I have a message for you. Go to Ho Sien Seng in the morning and he will tell you what do do.' Now I have come for the message."

The listener was at a loss how to proceed. The man was greatly excited. His feeling was too intense for mere pretense. Whatever the experience he had passed through, it was a good time to deal honestly with him.

"Li Si Huing," he said, "I know not of the message of which you speak. But if you received such word and come to me for advice, are you willing now to do as I say?"

"Whatever the teacher tells me I will hear."

"Well, first, this drinking of liquor and using of opium must be stopped if you are going to be a man. Are you able to do that?"

"The Heavenly Father's message must be obeyed."

"Then you know how you have brought disgrace on yourself and have put the school and mission work into disrepute in your neighborhood by your course."

"Yes, I know." There was no formal, empty self-depreciation in his words. He used no polite circumlocution in speaking of himself, but simply and humbly acknowledged his fault. And this was a very unusual course for a scholar of the Flowery Kingdom.

"If you are going to reinstate yourself and the school in the respect of the people around you, there must be full and public confession of these sins and an

apology for them, and a promise of a different course in the future."

"Yes, teacher." This was astounding. No attempt at evasion, or explanation, or excuse. Where was the pride and self-sufficiency common to the teacher of Confucian ethics?

"Besides this, my brother, do you not see that the worst offense has been against the Heavenly Father? Have you asked His forgiveness?"

"Will the teacher intercede for me?"

"Jesus Christ is our Advocate with the Father. Let us pray in His name."

When they rose from their knees, Li said:

"Will the teacher suggest how I may make the public statement which he has mentioned?"

After a moment's thought the superintendent said:

"The sooner it is done the better. Today and tomorrow you can let it be known that you have a statement to make publicly. On the third day, in the afternoon, I will come at two o'clock and the matter can be made plain."

At the appointed time the superintendent repaired to the little schoolhouse and found it full and a crowd standing outside of the door. A way was found for him to pass to the front. Mr. Li met him, asking him to be seated and refresh himself with a cup of tea. He received the cup and offered it to the oldest man within reach, who politely declined, urging the visitor to drink. He took a few sups, and without further

preliminaries raised his hand for silence and offered a brief prayer. Then he said:

"Friends and neighbors, and all the respected ones gathered here, I am glad to see you today. For months I have been sorrowful on account of the conditions in and around this school, but have not known just how to remedy them. Please accept my apologies for what has happened. I trust that in the future you will not have the same cause to complain."

Murmurs of remonstrance ran through the crowd, and some of the elders ventured to say that they desired no such apologies from Ho Sien Seng. But he continued, "Mr. Li has a statement to make, and I bespeak for him your consideration."

Then Li arose, pale and trembling, but determined. He recounted briefly the faults of his conduct among them. He told of the message from the Heavenly Father and of the advice received.

"I know," said he, "that what I have done is contrary to our own morality. It is contrary to Christian teachings. I have done wrong to Ho Sien Seng and to this school and to you, my neighbors. Above all, I have done wrong to my Heavenly Father. I have heard His message, and, with His help, I will never touch liquor or opium again."

He spoke this with uplifted hand and clear eye. It was no acting, but intense earnestness gave to it all an exceedingly dramatic effect. It produced in the mind of the crowd an entire revolution of sentiment towards him. Not many of them understood his

reference to the Heavenly Father and the message, but they understood the conviction and honesty of the man. The superintendent spoke again:

"Friends, you are witnesses of what Mr. Li has said. You will also be witnesses of his future life among you. But before we part there is one more matter. You have wanted me to dismiss him because of his faults. Now he has confessed and asked your pardon. Do you accept his apologies? If he remains among you and accomplishes good for you and your children, it will be because he has your good-will and coöperation. If he succeeds in overcoming himself, it will be partly through your sympathy and encouragement. I place him in your hands. I must have some surety for his good conduct and for the success of this school. Will you become his surety to me?"

Without dissenting voice the answer was, "We are his surety." And certain elders pressed forward and pledged themselves that they would be responsible for the teacher and school.

And to my knowledge he has not touched liquor or opium since that time. His progress in Christian knowledge and character was steady. Soon he took his public stand as a follower of the Christ, and held it with the respect of his people. The ambitions of his youth returned to him, and with the added incentive of acquiring influence that he might use it to advance the interests of the new kingdom into which he had entered, he renewed his studies of government examination themes. Some objected to this course,

saying that a Christian could not follow worldly ambition. But he replied that if he sought a name and influence for selfish reasons it would certainly be wrong. But his country needed help and guidance. Being a Christian should not make a man less of a patriot, and he had heard that those countries in which Christian principles were followed were the leading nations of the earth. Were the people of China blind or were they afraid to admit the truth, that they did not see that their country, the oldest of the world, the greatest in number of people and in the antiquity of its civilization, among the first in size and resources, was far behind in real knowledge and power? His country needed Christianity and Christian men in responsible places. On account of his wasted youth he could not hope to accomplish much, and he realized that it would be exceedingly difficult to maintain Christian character in public position, but as far as it would be possible he desired to contribute toward the introduction of Christian principles into public affairs.

When the time for the triennial examinations came, he entered the halls with twenty thousand other students who had already taken their first degree. They came from every part of the three provinces of which Nanking was the capital. They were the intellectual cream of seventy million people. With their friends and followers they took possession of the old city for some weeks.

The democracy of a country whose sovereign is absolute had its highest display at such times. The

viceroys, governors, generals, judges, prefects, and all magistrates of lower grade, whose tenure of office, in theory, depended solely upon the will of the Son of Heaven who occupied the Dragon throne, made great preparations for these events, sought the favor and feared the displeasure of these who were regarded as the "gems of the realm" before the Roman mother presented the Gracchi youths as her jewels. They came from the homes of and represented every class. Poverty or rank found no bar or favor inside of those gates. The judges were specially appointed by the Emperor from the greatest men of other provinces.

The papers presented had no names on them, and they were not supposed to know whose work they were examining. True, corruption and favoritism have played a large part in the awarding of decisions of late, yet real merit generally finds its reward, and the boy from the farm or hovel may rise to the Emperor's audience-chamber.

Into this arena Li entered. For two days and nights the candidates poured through the gates and were assigned their places. Each man had his brick-walled, tile-floored room, six feet by five feet in size, enclosed on three sides, open on the fourth to the long passages which opened on the broader streets. He carried in a blanket, food, pens, ink, and an ink-slab. Each man was searched after entering the gate, and any article beyond those prescribed found with him was contraband. As far as the gate, friends or servants might accompany them and assist with the burdens. From

there they went alone, and the earl's son must put his long finger-nails in jeopardy by grasping with his own hands his baggage, and for once in his life his back must bend under its burden, unless he put little wheels on a box and pulled it after him.

Then the gates were locked and paper and themes distributed. For thirty-six hours the hinges creaked only to give exit to those who were ill or who had failed or had finished the poetical essay, testing the writer's style and knowledge of classical literature. Li came out from this, and after a day's rest went in for the second test of a practical nature, relating to civil affairs. He came out from this somewhat exhausted and was not able to rest in the intermission, so that he went in for the third and final test, tired and weak. Rain had fallen and the streets and aisles of the unroofed enclosure were wet and muddy. There were no sewers. Filth and refuse piled up. The whole place reeked. The night of the last test was cold, and thousands slept on damp bricks in wet clothing. Fever, diarrhœa, dysentery, cholera, exhaustion claimed their own. If the sick realized it before too late, they were allowed to pass out of the gate. But the dead were lifted over the high walls and let down with ropes to the street outside.

All that night and through the next day crowds stood or crouched outside the gates. Many were curious or were peddling eatables. Most of them were friends of those inside, waiting to receive them as they came out (as the multitudes stand on the shore waiting

the landing of the heroes who have braved hardship and death on the battlefields). We were uneasy for our standard-bearer, one in twenty thousand, battling for honor, holding the banner of Christian manliness. Besides, I wanted to see the wonderful procession; so Chao Ju and I took our places in the throng to watch. All night long they kept coming, first in little groups of weak or discouraged ones. Later, small numbers of those who had finished were passed out.

Towards morning the procession began to grow steady, a thin line in ones and twos, then increasing in width until it became a solid phalanx. Nearly all showed fatigue, being pale and disheveled. Many laughed and chatted, but more were silent and serious. As I watched through those long hours a new sense of respect for those men and the institutions which produced them came to my mind. Nearly all of them were brainy, square-headed men, showing in their faces intellectual discipline which had developed strength of mind. Admit that their system is wrong; their information defective, and their ideals narrow; grant that they are superstitious and bigoted;—yet they come from a virile race of intellectual wrestlers, and the youthful West prancing in new strength has yet to learn the power of assimilation and endurance stored up in this ancient people. Versatility, in the East, is the birthright of the Japanese. Perseverance is the inheritance of the children of Han.

Boys there were in the ranks, precocious lads who had entered the ranks with the down still unshaven on

their upper lips. Gray-haired men also, who had formed part of such processions since youth and still hoped to hand down an honorable name to grandchildren. And the same variety was seen among those who waited outside. Brothers and fathers, sons received sires, and graybeards proudly and tenderly welcomed grandsons. Some of the students, haggard and weak, came supported by a friend, some borne of four, and one I saw carried on the back of a stalwart collegian.

At last Li came, weak and sick, scarcely able to drag himself along. A stranger was kindly carrying his load and encouraging him on the way. We received him gladly, and Chao Ju at once called a chair and had him carried directly to the hospital, where in a few days he regained his strength. When the lists of successful scholars were posted the first ten did not contain Li's name, and some of his friends were disappointed. He laughed at them. "Why should you look for my name there? I have wasted my years. If my name comes last of the two hundred who may succeed I will give thanks."

But in the next list of forty Li Si Huing showed in large black characters. Congratulations came to him from many sides. The mayor, looking over the list, questioned who this stranger might be, and recalled the man whom he had met at the foreigners' worship-hall when the doctor invited him to the Christmas exercises. He was beginning to understand somewhat of the importance of foreign intercourse, and, learning

that Li was in touch with the foreigners in Nanking, he finally invited him to a secretaryship in his office. So it was that when San Dsi went for assistance on the occasion of the riot, Li heard and returned with him in time to assist in the rescue of Mey Wing. After quiet had been restored on that day he called Chao Ju aside. A great deal of partly suppressed feeling was manifest in his manner as he asked:

"My brother, can you tell me anything of this girl you call Mey Wing?"

Chao Ju told him briefly all he knew of her life in Nanking, and of the family. Li was puzzled and disappointed, and the younger man asked the cause of his interest. Li hesitated, then said: "She calls to my mind my youth and one I lost. I cannot understand it." Then he added hesitatingly: "She seems to be one in a thousand to make a man's home bright. You are a fit mate for her."

Chao Ju's face flushed, then clouded. He was not in the habit of speaking of these matters to any, but ever since Tao Di's disappearance the question of her whereabouts and of his own course had perplexed him by day and by night, and he decided to confide in Li. He told him all, except the manner of Tao Di's disappearance. Only he and his uncle knew of her presence in that boat, except the young men who were with her, and they would not tell. He thought she was drowned in the canal, and shrank from bringing scandal upon her name.

Li thought the matter over, then said: "His Ex-

cellency, the Mayor, has power to cancel such an engagement and to appoint a guardian for Mey Wing who can protect her from that scoundrel, her uncle. If you and her mother will give me the authority I will undertake to lay the matters before Wang Da Ren, and with the doctor's assistance I believe both may be carried through. Of course there will be difficulties. Tao Di's parents must be informed. You will all have to appear before his Excellency sometime. But I would advise you to try it."

Chao Ju was glad to think of a release from his bonds. But he could not speak to Mrs. Wu on such a matter. He got the doctor to speak to the Lady, and she consulted with the mother and daughter, and finally Li was given permission to approach the mayor in reference to both matters.

CHAPTER X.

THE END, WHICH CAN BE READ.

As soon as an opportunity offered, Li fulfilled his promise and laid the two matters before the mayor. The result was that an early day was set for the formal hearing of the two applications.

The secretary was also empowered to make preliminary investigations and summon parties to the hearing and such witnesses as were necessary to the cases.

Tao Di's parents were summoned. Wu and the beggar king were still in custody, and when it was discovered that the priest and Rong Lao Yie were the middlemen in their agreement concerning Mey Wing, they also were hunted up and given notice to appear. Mrs. Wu decided to have San Dsi, her oldest son, appointed as legal head of her family, so that mother, son and daughter must be present, and Chao Ju would have to appear in his own behalf. Finally Wang Da Ren, knowing the deep interest of the doctor and the lady in these, their protégés, invited them and the pastor to be present at the hearing as a matter of courtesy.

When the nature of the applications became somewhat known, quite an interest was aroused. The hundreds of secretaries, assistants, attachés, constables and other underlings, who, with their families

and hangers-on, made thousands of people that were supported through this office, did not like this mode of procedure, for with the chief magistrate dealing directly and promptly there were no pickings and extortions for them, but the connection of the foreigners with the case gave interest.

Li was especially interested, and since the preparation of the matters had been largely left in his hands he consulted carefully with those concerned, so that he might be thoroughly posted. At his request Chao Ju told him about the last day on which he had seen Tao Di, and about her appearance in the dragon-boat race, but requested him not to make that public if possible, for the girl's sake, in case she should turn up again. The young man was puzzled by the surprise and great interest in this recital which Li manifested, and ventured to ask if he had any idea of what might have become of the girl, but Li gave an indefinite answer, asking seemingly irrelevant questions about the hospital at Wuhu.

The case was set for one o'clock. The foreigners with Chao Ju and Mey Wing and her mother went in sedan chairs. At the outer gates of the great compound the Chinese alighted and walked up the long approach to the doors of the hall. There they were met by attendants, who, after some delay, admitted them and assigned them to the petitioners' place. The chairs of the foreigners were carried to the great doors and their cards sent in to the mayor. In a short time a secretary returned and ordered the central doors

thrown open. Over a raised, stile-like barrier they were carried to an inner court, where they left the chairs and were conducted into the private apartments of his Excellency, who met them cordially, and after a few words excused himself and passed out to the public hall. After a time they were ushered out and given retired seats where they could see and hear what passed. The room was a spacious one, and overhead, the ceiling was close to the lofty tile roof, which was supported by two rows of polished wooden pillars placed through the middle of the apartment.

The scene was an animated one. Wang Da Ren sat on a raised dais, in official robes. Secretaries and attendants, also wearing long robes and red caps, sat or stood near. Rows of red-coated soldiers stood to keep back the crowds.

A clerk called the case. "Your Excellency, the first case is an application for a writ rendering void the betrothal papers between Chao Ju and Sung Tao Di."

"Who is the secretary in charge of this case?"

Li Sien Seng stepped forward, and, with a bend of one knee in salutation to his superior, replied that the matter had been referred to him.

"Give a statement of the case."

"Your Excellency, the facts are these: Ju Chao Ju and Sung Tao Di were, in childhood, legally betrothed to each other by their respective parents. The girl remained with her parents. Now, when the time has come when the contract should be fulfilled, the girl is missing. The young man, therefore, prays your

Excellency to grant a writing dissolving the betrothal contract and allowing him to arrange another marriage with whom he can. The papers and witnesses are here in court, and if your Excellency so wishes, they may now appear."

"Are the betrothal papers properly made out, signed and attested?"

"They are, your Excellency."

"Are the middlemen willing to have the agreement annulled?"

"Here is the written consent, your Excellency, and they can be called to acknowledge it."

"Are the parents of the girl willing?"

"They have not signified their consent, your Excellency."

"Are the parents of the young man willing?"

"His father, your Excellency, is not living. His mother and his father's oldest brother join in the petition."

"In your investigations, have you found any cause why the application should not be granted?"

"None, your Excellency, unless it be the attitude of the girl's friends."

Wang Da Ren considered for a moment, then said:

"Call the applicant."

When Chao Ju had been cautioned as to his testimony, the mayor asked:

"Do you know anything of the whereabouts of the young woman to whom you are betrothed?"

"No, your Excellency; I have made every effort to find her, and have failed."

"Why do you wish to have the betrothal canceled?"

"Your Excellency, the father hands down to the son and the son to the grandson. The father of your unworthy petitioner was cut off early, and my mother has but one son to look to. To whom will be handed down my father's name if I wait all my life on one who comes not?"

"Well spoken, young man. Filial piety is the root of propriety. Call the parents of the girl."

Sung and his wife came groveling in, bowing low on bended knees before the great man. Pitiable indeed they were. Poor and pallid, ragged in clothing and emaciated in body, showing the ravages of lack of food and indulgence in opium.

"Are you the parents of the girl to whom this man is betrothed?"

"Yes, your Excellency."

"Are you ready to fulfill the agreement?"

"We are, your Excellency, but the girl has disappeared."

"Where is she now?"

"Alas, your Excellency, would that we might say. On the morning of the Dragon Festival she disappeared from our home. She was later at her aunt's home, near the south gate of this city, and later she was seen in the preaching-place of the foreigners on the great market street, since when we have not been able to trace her."

A murmur which went around among the crowd told

that this shot had its intended effect in throwing suspicion on the friends of Chao Ju, in connection with her disappearance.

"Have you any reason why this application should not be granted?" continued Wang Da Ren.

"Your Excellency, your servants are poor and old and weak. Heaven has granted us but the one child. We have looked to her children to carry down our blood and to give us a shelter in old age. The young man found friends in those who come from a strange land, practising strange rites, recognizing not our sacred ties and books. We wonder not that he should wish to be released from mating with our poor little one. Perhaps he seeks for a household fairy among those of a fairer hue, who need not to look back upon such low ancestry. Where our daughter is we do not know. Sorrow has dwelt with us since she was taken away, and we have not known joy since the singing bird was taken from our hovel. But when we remember where she was last seen and reflect on how much he would desire to be released, as is evidenced by this petition to your Excellency, we cannot keep from our minds suspicions which we cannot speak, because we have no evidence. But we would implore the great man to look on us in pity, and, remembering our destitution, not to grant his desire, unless he pay to us such a sum as the eminent wisdom of your Excellency shall decide to be sufficient to lighten the sorrows of our lonely old age."

The mayor turned to Chao Ju:

"Have you anything to say to this?"

Chao Ju saw that he must make the situation plain. He briefly recounted the life the parents had compelled the girl to live and his efforts to get her away, and his offer to fulfill the agreement at an early date. He told, also, of his seeing her on two occasions on the day of the Dragon Festival, and of her disappearance when the boat was overturned. This last-mentioned occurrence was clear in the minds of nearly all present. They knew, too, that after the boat capsized all its occupants had been rescued but two, one of the rowers and the one who occupied the seat in the stern, whom all supposed to be a man in woman's clothing. The outer clothing had been found floating in the water, but neither body had been recovered. A profound sensation was produced when the missing girl was identified with that mystery. In the midst of this, Li stepped forward and asked permission to present further testimony.

"Your Excellency, I had hoped that it would not be necessary to make public these facts concerning one who has passed away. But since the girl's parents have made it necessary by their insinuations, I wish to lay evidence before your Excellency to show that the girl is actually dead and how she died. When the petitioner told me these facts concerning his last knowledge of the poor girl, it astonished me, because it connected her with some other secrets which I supposed were in the grave of one whose history it grieves me to bring up now. I had a pupil, who was to me as

a dear son. He left home, and for a time was lost to me. Then I found him in Hankow, and started home with him. But he lies in his long home on the hills above your beautiful West Gardens. As he approached this city in a boat he told me of when he was last in this city and how he left it. He and some companions came to this city to attend the Dragon Festival. On their way they stayed at this man's inn, and, finding it a convenient place, stopped over for a day or two. This man furnished the materials for drinking and opium-smoking, and compelled his daughter to wait on them, and used her petty savings to pay to them his gambling debts. By his ill-treatment he drove her from the home, and when they came on she followed, and finally, in the afternoon of that day of fate, met them by accident and entered their boat with them. When the accident occurred he was thrown into the water, but struggled to where he could reach a passing house-boat, and clinging to it was swept down the current. He finally managed to climb into the boat with the assistance of one of the boat hands, nearly exhausted from cold and a wound he had received. He did not care to return and face the excitement, and finding that the boat was bound for Wuhu he had them take him as a passenger. There he went at once to the hospital to receive treatment. He had seen the girl spring to the same house-boat when the rowing-boat capsized, but in his weakness thought no more of it for that day, and then hearing nothing of her concluded to say nothing, but wondered what had become of her.

While he was in the hospital she was brought in by one of the ladies of the mission, and he heard how she had been found in the street, and from her ravings he gathered she had been in the boat. But he went on soon and had not heard of her. When I heard the petitioner's story, at once I sent a messenger to Wuhu to make inquiries, who brought back word that she was received as a patient at that time and died some two weeks later and was buried, with a burial permit from the magistrates, a copy of which with other papers in proof of these facts are here for your Excellency's reading. I did not present these facts earlier, for I hoped that it would not be necessary to reopen these sad chapters. I trust your Excellency will pardon me for withholding them."

This testimony produced a still greater sensation in the hall, and the current of popular feeling which had been running against Chao Ju turned against the miserable parents of the dead girl. After a brief examination of the papers Wang Da Ren gave his decision. Looking sternly at the cowering man and woman, he said:

"It is evident that you have grossly failed in your treatment of your girl, and deserve severe censure and punishment. But heaven has punished you. Unpitied and uncared for by hands of children, you will pass your years. You may go. The proof of the death of the betrothed girl is ample, and no blame is attached to the young man. There is, therefore, no need of further proceeding with this hearing. He is

free to seek a wife where he may. The papers will be preserved in our achives."

A buzz of comment ran over the crowd, and Chao Ju retired, while Wang Da Ren curtly said, "Call the next case."

The clerk rose again and read:

"The next case, your Excellency, is an application for appointment of a guardian for the person of Ang Mey Wing, and of Wu Wan Fuh as head of the house of his deceased father."

Li was busy giving directions to a constable when this was read. He knew that this case would be called next, and was prepared to answer when the mayor turned to him.

"Can you give us the status of this case, Mr. Secretary?"

"If it please your Excellency, Wu Chuei Dsi passed away some eleven years ago. He and his wife and three children came from Shantung, and have no kindred here except an uncle, who is unworthy to have control of their affairs. He seeks to do so, and has tried to betroth his niece to another base one. These two are now in custody as ringleaders in the riot of last month, and it is to be proved that they incited the riot to forward their private nefarious purposes and seized upon the occasion to attempt to forcibly take possession of the girl against her mother's desire. It is in order to escape these persecutions that this petition is presented to have the oldest son of the family ap-

pointed as its legal head. All the members of the family concur in its request."

This also gave promise of interesting developments, and the spectators leaned over each other in silence, waiting to hear.

"Call the petitioners."

They came forward—mother, son, and two daughters. San Dsi had not received much education. He had been the mainstay in support of the family, and his dress and speech showed the lack of such culture, but he was an honest, good lad, and his face proved it. His mother trusted him and was proud of him. He was developing the same kindly, upright character that his father had before him, and had in addition the moral freedom of vision which came from the sweeping away of superstitions, and from Christian conceptions of life. The daughters shrank from the publicity, but bore themselves bravely and modestly, bringing credit to their training. The beauty of Mey Wing caused many exclamations of surprise and appreciation, but she appeared unconscious of it all.

In response to Wang Da Ren's questions, Mrs. Wu recounted the main points of their life, giving explicitly her husband's directions that Mey Wing should not be betrothed without her own consent thereto. Then she told of the proceedings of her husband's brother in disregarding her husband's word and seeking to betroth her to Yin Dsi Ching, and of the attempt to carry her off by force on the day of the riot.

Several others came, who told of the activity on the

part of Wu and the priest and Yin in fomenting and causing the riot of that day. Finally the two contracting parties in the agreement purporting to be a betrothal between Yin and Wu Mey Wing, and the two middlemen, the priest and Rong Lao Yie, were called in. It was noticeable that the priest remained as far from the mayor as possible, and that his face was well obscured in the voluminous folds of his priest's robe. Wu was examined closely concerning the part he had taken. He denied having any part in causing the riots. But he admitted freely that he had made the agreement concerning Mey Wing, and appealed to Wang Da Ren as to the law in such cases. Was not he, the only surviving brother of the dead husband and father, entitled to take his place legally in controlling their affairs? And the mayor was forced, against his wishes in this matter, to admit that he was right in his claim. He called for the agreement and read it over. It was perfectly correct in form and language, and Mey Wing's heart seemed as lead in view of the prospect before her, while Chao Ju's beat like a trip-hammer in his excitement and indignation.

What was his freedom worth to him now? He had longed for it for years, and now it had come in so remarkable a way only to be worthless to him, as he found Mey Wing trapped in cruel toils more fearful than those from which he had escaped. Fierce revolt against the injustice of the whole system filled him with bitterness. The mayor read the agreement aloud, showing how closely it bound Wu Mey Wing to Yin Dsi Ching.

Then a light suffused Mrs. Wu's pale face, and she stepped forward and kneeled in front of the great man.

"Well," he said, surprised at her act, "have you anything to say?"

"Thanks be to our Lord Jehovah, who forsaketh not His little ones. Even a sparrow falleth not to the ground without His knowledge, and we are of more value in His sight than many sparrows. He taketh the wise in their own craftiness and overthroweth the plots of the evil man. Your Excellency, that paper does not at all bind her whom ye call my daughter. There is no Wu Mey Wing.

This strange move and declaration caused the third sensation of the day, and the concourse crowded forward to hear and see the dénouement. Wang Da Ren turned and gave strict commands to preserve order and silence; then, with perplexed face, said, "Woman, what is the meaning of this word?"

"If your Excellency would deign to examine the petition presented to-day by your servants, it would be seen that it asks that a guardian be appointed for the person of Ang Mey Wing. If there is a Wu Mey Wing your handmaid knows her not."

As she mentioned the girl's true name both the mayor and Li started visibly, while the priest sought to retire still farther behind others gathered there. The expression of triumph on Wu's face changed to one of doubt. Li seemed changed to yellow stone, and he did not move a muscle during the proceeding immediately following. The mayor stared for a moment at

the girl, then recalling himself called for the petition, and after scanning it closely, said:

"How now? Is not this girl, then, your daughter?"

"She has been reputed to be, your Excellency, by all who know us here, and she has grown up as such in my home. But in truth she is not." And she repeated rapidly the facts regarding Mey Wing's mother, already given in a former chapter.

The mayor listened with marked interest, although not with the rigidity of strained attention shown in Li's attitude. At the close of her recital the latter suddenly seemed to wake, and, starting forward, he, too, kneeled beside the woman, to the astonishment of all present.

"Your Excellency," he said, "has not yet heard all of this strange case. Wonderful it is that we have met here. I, too, your servant, have a confession to make, and I crave in advance your Excellency's forbearance. There is a part of the book of my life which I had supposed was past and closed. But it is now opened again by the story of this woman, and my heart bleeds anew. If your Excellency will permit, I would tell a part of it, for it concerns the case now before you. That poor mother who left her child to the world was the wife of your servant."

Again the hum of comment filled the room as those in front repeated the words to those in the rear, and all exclaimed in wonder at the developments. It required all the authority of the constables and soldiers to restore silence so that the examination might pro-

ceed. Mey Wing, with parted lips and startled eyes, heard with bated breath this astounding claim. What new perplexity and confusion was coming into her life? Who was she? Wu, Ang, or Li? But Wang Da Ren voiced part of her question.

"Is then the girl's name neither Ang nor Wu? Or are we all possessed this day by the spirits of confusion? Explain yourself. Why do you claim that poor woman to be your wife when you are known as Li?"

"Your Excellency, your unworthy servant is that unhappy man who, pursued by the fiend of the opium-pipe, failed of realizing the promise of youth. When I returned to seek the light of my home, and my brother told me he had heard of her death, penniless among strangers, no word reached me of her little one left behind. Bitterness filled my heart. Father and mother had gone to the spirit land; my brother, who managed all the property, upbraided me with wasting our patrimony, and, crazed with grief and despair, I left home, saying I would disgrace and burden them no more. I sought to forget my past and bury myself, and started anew, homeless and hopeless, under the assumed name of Li. But heaven has forgiven me. The Son of God has sought me, a lost wanderer; has freed me from the bonds of slavery to opium and drink, has given me new manhood and hope; now, if your Excellency can believe my words and trust me as worthy of so great a joy, a daughter will be given to me who has not hoped for love for twenty years; who thought to go down to the grave unknown and unwept."

The pause which followed this avowal was painful in its silence and suspense.

Wang Da Ren regarded Li intently for a full minute before replying.

"This is a strange story you tell us, Mr. Secretary. It is not impossible. Yet the annals of the Three Kingdoms hardly contain a more romantic one. But it is no light thing to give the keeping of a girl over to a stranger on his own word of this kind. How had your brother received word of the death of your wife, yet knowing nothing of the child she left? What has become of him and of the property rightfully belonging to you and this girl, if she indeed be your own?"

"Your Excellency's words are true. But your servant has no knowledge of the whereabouts of that brother. Word came to me at one time that he had sold the property and disappeared, and no word has come since. If he is living I know not."

There was a stir in the crowd which seemed to center among the constables and prisoners. Wu succeeded in crowding forward so as to attract the attention of the mayor and craved permission to speak.

"Well," exclaimed the latter, "what do you want? Are you the lost brother? We might as well have all the wonders at once."

"No, your Excellency, but if command might be given to stop that disciple of Buddha who is trying to get out yonder we may find some trace of him whom you seek."

This directed the attention of all to the priest, who

had been quietly edging his way to the rear, hoping to escape unobserved. The constables at once led him back, pale but composed, to where Li, or Ang, as he now claimed to be named, stood.

"Now tell us quickly why you push your words into the matter," said the mayor sharply to Wu.

Wu was about to answer, when a soldier struck him sharply with his staff, saying, "Kneel to the great man, fellow." And on his knees he spoke:

"Your Excellency, I know I am unworthy your notice and have done great wrong. I humbly crave grace and mercy. And in part reparation I may be allowed to assist a little in exposing the evil-doer in this matter. Your servant has heard part of this story before, but not clearly. Ang Sz I, the elder brother of this man, did not cease his evil course when he deceived his brother and defrauded the little one. The time came when it was convenient for him to disappear, and he became a neophyte, with no name. That neophyte has in time become a priest of much sanctity, and stands before you to-day."

The recognition between Li and the priest, meeting thus for the first time in twenty years, was complete, and there could be no denial or evasion.

The chain of evidence was complete. But there was no opportunity given for greetings between them, if any had been desired then, for Wang Da Ren, stepping down from the platform, faced the younger brother and said:

"Truly we have had wonders enough for one day, and

this hall has become a place of confession instead of a court of judgment. But there is one more step to be added to make the story complete that is for me to tell, although I marvel you have not thought of it before. Ang Ru I, follow my words and answer me if I speak truly. The father of her whom you took to be your wife was named Fan Lien Fuh, was he not? Did your wife tell you of an elder brother named Jao So, of whom she thought much?"

An exclamation from Mey Wing's mother caused him to turn to her with the question:

"What is it, woman? Does that name mean anything to you?"

"Yes, your Excellency," she answered, trembling, "Wang Jao So was the name of her elder brother, kept by my husband for many years."

"This, then, is another certain proof of her identity," said the mayor with emotion. "Her mother was my mother first. Some years after my father died Fan Lien Fuh became the husband of our mother and their baby-girl became my pet and playmate. But before she became engaged to this man I had left home and did not see her again. Nor did I ever know him. When she disappeared I sought for her, and sent messengers to the home of her husband, who learned nothing. Now I know why." And the look he cast on the priest was an intimation that retribution would not long be delayed. "The place of my playmate and sister has never been filled in my heart. In this maiden she lives again. Do you think, my daughter,

you would be willing to take that place and brighten the life of a man who has no daughters of his own, and who loved your mother?"

Mey Wing's heart went out to him. She was full of gratitude to him for his kindness, and he was a living link binding her to the gentle mother whose existence had been revealed to her that day. But even more strongly did her sympathy draw her to the lonely man whom his own weaknesses and unhappy circumstances had bound to so joyless a life, but who had of late proved his manliness and talent. While she hesitated, her grateful and appealing eyes wandered from one to the other. Her father's heart swelled as he felt her sympathy, but he made no sign. The uncle saw the struggle, and said:

"I see! The heart of the daughter seeks unto the father. And it is right."

Tears sprang to Mey Wing's eyes as she fell to her knees by his side, saying:

"O sir, forgive me. I am grateful for your kindness."

"Nay, child," he responded, his hand resting on her head, "do not grieve. If your heart is true as was your mother's, you can love us both." And he raised her to her foster-mother's side.

Then, turning to where the foreigners sat, eager spectators of all that had transpired, he said:

"I think we will have to call on my learned friend, the doctor, to advise us in this matter. What shall we do with this little one, of whom we did not know this

morning and who now fills so much space in our hearts?"

The doctor stepped forward with a suspicion of redness under his shaggy eyebrows, but a merry twinkle withal shining out.

"I, too, might put in a claim," he said, "for I have long loved this maiden. And I think she is not ungrateful. And the Lady who has taught her and this good woman who has been so loving a mother to her, they would find it hard to give her up. But youth and middle age think not alike. Violets nod to daisies in the springtime. Since I have been appealed to, allow me to suggest another claimant." And his eye sought out Chao Ju, while Mey Wing's face flamed with telltale signs. The doctor led the young man before the two older men.

"Will you give her to him?"

And they said, "We will," and San Dsi and the foster-mother and the lady said, "It is well."

THE END

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